TALKS *to* LEGIONARIES

THE ALLOCUTIO FOR A YEAR

Rev. Francis J. Ripley

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by

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GLASGOW:
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INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH the Legion of Mary was founded only just over forty years ago, it has now grown into the largest apostolic organisation of the laity the Church has ever known. It is as extensive as the Church itself, undertakes practically every kind of apostolic work that falls within the competence of layfolk and has established a remarkable reputation for effectiveness. Its achievements are sufficient testimony to the value of the system by which its members are formed spiritually, intellectually and technically. The ideal of the Legion is that every item in its system, and especially in the meeting, should play its part in forming the members. Most important is the training according to the system of Master and Apprentice. This runs right through the system. For example, the Spiritual Director's part in formation is not restricted to the short talk he gives at every meeting. He is at work for the whole ninety minutes for which the meeting may last. The Legion has always believed, and it has proved, that merely talking to people, taken by itself, is of very little formative value.

The *allocutio* is just one element in formation. By itself it is not tremendously important. But its place is enhanced when it is linked with formation according to the Master and Apprentice system. The official *Handbook* gives the following instructions concerning the *allocutio*:

1. It is a short talk given by the Spiritual Director;

2. Except in special circumstances it should be a commentary on the *Handbook*;

3. Its object is to familiarise the members with every point in the *Handbook*;

4. The Legion desires its members to have a degree of knowledge of the *Handbook* which can be imparted only by a systematic verbal explanation and expansion of the *Handbook* week after week, year after year;

5. When the Spiritual Director is absent the commentary should be made by the President or by any member designated by the President;

6. A mere reading from the *Handbook* does not suffice for the *allocutio;*

7. It should not last for longer than five or six minutes.

In the pages which follow a series of *allocutiones* will be found. They fulfil the above instructions, with the reservation that in some of them there may be found enough material for more than one commentary. They are offered to priests but, even more, to Legionaries who have to give the *allocutio* when the Spiritual Director is not at the meeting. But they are most earnestly asked not to read these *allocutiones* out publicly in place of their own *allocutio.* They should read through the pages chosen and try to make the contents their own.

Well-established Praesidia, where the *Handbook* has been used over the years for Spiritual Reading, might find that the chapters which follow provide a welcome change and help towards a fuller understanding of the *Handbook.*

It is the author's conviction that the Legion of Mary is not yet being used in most places to anything more than a small percentage of its capacity. The *Handbook* is neither known nor observed as it should be. The consequence is that Praesidium after Praesidium has the reputation of consisting of a small number of people who do work which neither sets a headline nor demands high courage nor heroic zeal. Even house to house visitation is not yielding more than a small proportion of the results which would come if the system were being fully followed.

Young people are to-day turning to secular movements to find there the exciting work, the active idealism and the organised enthusiasm for which they are craving. They should find these in the Church. In every parish there should be groups of apostles fired with enthusiasm, inspired by the conviction that no work is more worth-while than the spreading of the reign of Christ amongst men. But such groups hardly exist. We provide clubs; we are too easily contented when we seem to have kept the young people off the streets. They and their elders need more; they want more; they have a right to more; the Popes have told us that we must give them more.

Christ's work would have ended with His Ascension if He had not formed a Body for Himself in which He would live on in the world. Every active priest needs a body too. He needs real members, not just helpers or fund-raisers. He needs members who will faithfully multiply his presence, carry with them his message, mirror his spirit and manifest his zeal.

I believe that when the Legion of Mary is employed as it should be, it will not only attract men and women of every age and walk of life, including boys and girls in their teens, make them enthusiastic for Christ and the Church, but also form them in holiness, knowledge of the Faith and techniques of apostleship. The talks which follow are offered as a small contribution towards bringing this about.

FRANCIS J. RIPLEY.

December 31st, 1962.

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1

HOW IT BEGAN

A CONFERENCE of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was meeting in a property known as Myra House in Francis Street, Dublin, towards the end of the First World War. Francis Street is in that poor old part of Dublin which lies around the Protestant Cathedral of St. Patrick. Nearby is the old Catholic Church of St. Nicholas of Myra. It must have been about 1917 when a number of ladies was asked to help the St. Vincent de Paul Brothers in serving free breakfasts to poor children on Sundays. After some time the free breakfasts were discontinued but the women remained on, forming with the Brothers a recruiting centre for the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. They held regular meetings in Myra House and used the prayer card of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, adding five decades of the Rosary. There was spiritual reading, too, followed by the minutes of the previous meeting. Members gave their reports on recruiting campaigns and on any other apostolic activity on which they may have been engaged. Religious and doctrinal subjects were discussed also, as well as practical ways of helping others and doing good for the Church. The meetings usually began on Sundays at 4.30 p.m. and ended with the recitation of the Angelus announced by the 6 o'clock bell.

These meetings continued until sometime in August, 1921. The time is significant because just then events which were to shake the world were taking place in Russia. The date was 1917, the very year in which the first seeds of the future Legion of Mary were sown. In March of that year striking workers of Petrograd seized the capital. The Emperor abdicated on March 15th. In July, Lenin staged an unsuccessful uprising. On November 7th the Bolsheviks

seized power. According to the old style calendar it was October and so this is known as the October revolution. The Communist party was formed in 1918. Who is to say that eternity will not reveal that the Legion of Mary was the answer of divine Providence to godless Communism? For that group of workers in the Dublin slums was the embryo of Mary's Legion.

Many things have happened since which lead us to think that this may well be so. Quite early on a pilgrimage of the Legion to Lourdes was being planned. "What colour will our ladies wear in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament?" somebody asked. Blue was excluded, for that was recognised as the colour of the Children of Mary. The only material available at the time in sufficient quantity to make the cloaks required was red. So red, the colour of Communism, became the colour of Mary's Legion—red also for the Precious Blood, the Holy Spirit and martyrdom.

Many years later when it was imperative for the Church in China to prepare itself for imminent Communist persecution, Divine Providence arranged that the Apostolic Internuncio there should be Archbishop Riberi, who had come to know the Legion when he was a secretary at the Apostolic Nunciature in Dublin and who, as Apostolic Delegate for East Africa, had given so much help to Edel Quinn. He called on the Legion of Mary to prepare the Catholics of China for the Communist onslaught. The results are well known. The Legion was singled out as Communism's most successful and dangerous enemy and its members honoured by being imprisoned, tortured and even martyred.

Other points of resemblance there are, too—the Latin names used, the method of working in cells and through personal contact. All this emphasises that the Legion of Mary was raised up in the Church by the Providence of God. We as Legionaries have immense responsibility to be faithful to the Constitution enshrined in our *Handbook*.

Grace comes to us in so far as we are loyal and zealous members of this world-wide army of the Queen of Heaven.

2

FIRST STEPS

PROVIDENCE arranged that from the start the little group of apostles, which was later to be known as the Legion of Mary, should be under the direction of the priests of the parish in which they met. Their names ought to be recorded because they were largely responsible for the developments which later took place. They were Father Toher and his friend Father Creedon. Divine Providence also brought it about that one of the topics frequently discussed at the first meetings was the form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin recommended by one who was then a little-known Blessed, Grignion de Montfort. Comparatively few people knew about it then, and even those who were discussing it had not clearly grasped its essential idea. They were all deeply interested, so much so that a special meeting was called to examine this devotion. Of that meeting one of those concerned says: "I have often tried to place that particular event; it must have been almost immediately before the start of the Legion. It was just like making an electric connection and something happens. We spent the evening talking about the devotion. Then at once the Legion happened." Straightway after that meeting some of the ladies asked if they could not do the kind of work which the St. Vincent de Paul Brothers were doing and visit the Union Hospital every Sunday. They were advised to seek support for their venture and a meeting was arranged for the following Wednesday.

It was the eve of Our Lady's birthday, September 7th, 1921, at 8 o'clock in the evening when fifteen ladies met Mr. Frank Duff and Father Toher in the usual meeting room in Myra House, Francis Street. They were surprised

to find that one of their number had prepared an altar for the meeting. The table, which was usually bare, was now covered with a white cloth on which stood the statue of the Immaculate Conception, two vases with flowers and two candlesticks with lighted candles. The Queen was waiting for these first recruits of an army which was to become one of the greatest phenomena the Church has ever known.

The invocation and prayer to the Holy Ghost were said, followed by five decades of the Rosary and the spiritual reading. Then, all unknowing, those seventeen people began to map out the Legion of Mary.

" Under whose auspices were they to work?" they wondered. The answer came at once: they had come together to serve the Queen of Heaven. They decided on a weekly meeting and weekly active work. The setting should be the same as that first meeting and all those prayers would be said. As to work, they would undertake the systematic visitation of the Dublin Union Hospital. They would visit in pairs, each pair going to a ward. They decided that each week they would undertake active apostolic work which had to be substantial. The giving of material relief was excluded because that was already being done in the right spirit by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. A President and a Secretary were appointed. The President was a lady born in Australia, Mrs. Kirwin. Those early members say that she ruled with the proverbial rod of iron. She was the only elderly person there, but the young ones loved and trusted her. She was the poorest person in the room and thus from the start the note was struck that in Mary's Legion there were to be no social or worldly distinctions.

So with the first Vespers of Our Lady's birthday the Legion of Mary was finally ushered into the world. For years the preparatory work had gone on. Now it was over. The hand was set to the plough. A work greater than any other undertaken by organised laity in the nineteen centuries of the Church's history had started.

Every Praesidium has a strict duty to maintain the spirit of the organisation to which it belongs. Once the name of the Legion of Mary is adopted the members accept with it the strict obligation of being faithful in every detail to the Constitution set out in the *Handbook*. Nobody has any right to deviate from that Constitution. Infidelity always means deprivation of grace. The Church has approved of the Legion of Mary as it is described in its official *Handbook*. Those who do not wish to observe the rules of the *Handbook* should start some other organisation. But from the start it is as well to recall what the *Handbook* itself says in the beginning: "If past experience is an indication, no branch of the Legion will fail which is worked faithfully according to rule. The Legion is a system which can be thrown out of balance by suppressing or altering any of its parts. Of it, could the following verse have been written:

Pluck one thread, and the web ye mar;
Break but one
Of a thousand keys, and the paining jar
Through all will run.

So, if unprepared to work the system exactly as described in these pages, please do not start the Legion at all."

3

EARLY GROWTH

IN a series of talks like this a detailed history of the beginning of the Legion of Mary would be out of place. The story has already been told by Cecily Hallack, Frank Duff and others. A brief outline must suffice here.

When the Legion began there was an area in Dublin notorious for its "ladies of the street." It has gone down in history as Bentley Place. Thirty-one street girls lived

there. Everybody took it for granted that their conversion was completely hopeless. The Legion of Mary visited them and suggested that they should go on a retreat. That simple sentence hides many highly dramatic details, but the result is historic. Twenty-three of those girls went on retreat to the Convent of Mercy at Baldoyle and afterwards took up residence in the first of the Hostels opened in the emergency by the Legion of Mary. That was in July, 1922. The Hostel, called *Sancta Maria,* is still doing magnificent work for the same type of girls in Harcourt Street, Dublin.

At this time the movement was known as the Association of Our Lady of Mercy. By 1924, four more groups had been founded and in November of that year a central Council was formed consisting of the officers of each group. In November, 1925, the name, Legion of Mary, was adopted. While other works went on, a special effort was made to tackle the problem of the down-and-out, which was very serious at that time in Dublin. In March, 1927, a forbidding and squalid-looking room, the old North Dublin Workhouse, was offered by the authorities to the Legion of Mary rent free on condition that they did their own repairs. By now there were thirteen praesidia in Dublin, so far only of women. To meet the demands of the new work, men were recruited. Young and old they came to offer their services. The old workhouse was prepared and on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25th, 1927, a hostel for destitute men was opened and called after Our Lady, the Morning Star. It has grown into one of the best known institutions in the whole world. Now 200 men may be accommodated there any night. They find cleanliness, food, friendliness, comfort and, above all, a deeply religious atmosphere through which many have found their way back to the practice of their religion.

In autumn, 1930, a similar hostel, called after Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, *Regina Coeli,* was opened nearby. Not only does this hostel care for women who are poor, destitute, down and out, but it has done and is

doing splendid work for the unmarried mother. In fact, the development of this side of the apostolate of *Regina Coeli* has set a headline for the Catholic world. The policy has always been to encourage the mothers to look after their own children who go out to school like other children while their mothers go to work, and all return in the evening to home at *Regina Coeli*, where special family units are at their disposal.

In 1927 the first Praesidium outside Dublin was formed at Waterford. April, 1928, saw the Legion for the first time outside Ireland—at Glasgow. By 1932 there were 22 Praesidia in and around Glasgow. On May 31st, Feast of Lady Mediatrix of All Graces, 1929, the first Praesidium in England was formed at the Sacred Heart Convent, Hammersmith, London. By September, 1929, there was a Praesidium in Newcastle and Liverpool had two by the following December. The first Senatus, the governing body of England, was set up on August 3rd, 1930, in London. Soon a London Legionary went to India and on February 2nd, 1931, a Praesidium was founded in Madras.

The previous autumn an American Vincentian priest was returning home from Dublin through Paris. In Dublin he had never heard the Legion of Mary mentioned, but he did hear of it in Paris. What he heard so impressed him that he returned at once to the Irish capital, studied the Legion and wrote an article in an American theological magazine entitled: "Is This the Long-Looked for Church Society?" The result was the foundation of the Legion of Mary in the New World. For the record, let it be stated that the first Praesidium was founded at Raton, New Mexico, on November 27th, 1931, and it was composed of men. The following autumn a foundation was made in Canada when a Praesidium of Cowichan Indians was set up at Duncan, B.C. So the forward march began. Now the Legion of Mary is recognised as a most powerful organisation of the lay apostolate. It has spread into more than 1,200 dioceses all over the world and is still constantly and

rapidly expanding. It has met and passed all the tests, including martyrdom. Its active members must number about 1,000,000 and its auxiliary members probably ten times that number. Indeed the finger of God is here.

4

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

BEGINNING to-day, we will go through the *Handbook* from beginning to end picking out some of the key sentences, which will give you a quick understanding of the Legion as a whole.

" No branch of the Legion will fail which is worked faithfully according to rule, so if unprepared to work the system exactly as described in these pages, please do not start the Legion at all."

" The object of the Legion of Mary is the sanctification of its members by prayer and active co-operation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary's and the Church's work."

" The spirit of the Legion of Mary is that of Mary herself."

" The secret of all success with others lies in the establishment of personal contact, the contact of love and sympathy."

" At the bottom of all really fruitful work must be the readiness to give oneself entirely."

" Real achievement is dependent upon sustained effort."

" The Legion's trust in Mary is limitless, knowing that by the ordinance of God her power is without limit."

" The Legion believes that the formation of apostles cannot be effected at all without the accompaniment of the work itself."

" Standards for membership should not go beyond those which the Popes have had in mind when they declare that in any class whatever an élite could be formed and trained to the apostolate."

" Difficulties which seem so formidable in advance resemble a forest, which at a distance appears solid and impenetrable, but when once approached is found easy of entry."

" In talking of work of grace let none be so worldly prudent as to ignore the existence of grace."

" Perfection of membership is to be estimated according to exact adherence to the system."

" Foremost in its system, the primary obligations of each member, the Legion sets the duty of attendance at its meetings."

" What an ideal! A whole population organised for God! And yet this is no mere ideal. It is the most practical and possible thing in the world to-day—if eyes are but uplifted and arms unfolded."

" The Legion prayers and the Legion system are invariable: members are not at liberty to vary the rules and practices as they choose."

" The Officers should give a report to their Praesidia of each meeting of the Curia."

" It is an essential duty of the Praesidium to raise up and preserve around itself a strong body of auxiliaries."

" It should be regarded as a necessary part of the system for each Praesidium to conduct a junior Praesidium."

" The whole idea of organisation is the unification of the many. From the member up through the ascending grades of authority in the Legion must a principle of connection exist. The cement of this connection is loyalty; the loyalty of the member to the Praesidium, of the Praesidium to its Curia, of Curia to Senatus, and of Senatus to the Concilium Legionis; and to the ecclesiastical authorities everywhere."

" The duty of extension is not for the higher councils alone, nor for Curia Officers alone. It is the duty of each member of the Curia. Nay, more, it is the duty of each individual Legionary."

" The honouring of Legion devotion to Mary by serious meditation and zealous practice is placed on each member as a solemn trusteeship to the Legion. It is to be regarded as an essential part of Legionary duty, ranking before any other obligation of membership."

" The imitation of Mary's humility is both the root and the instrument of Legionary action."

" Real devotion to Mary obliges apostleship."

" Legionaries should undertake De Montfort's ' True Devotion ' to Mary."

" Where timidity, which is commonly called human respect, is allowed free play, all work for souls is reduced to triviality."

" Every member should according to capacity study the *Handbook* thoroughly."

" To the Mass must the Legionary have recourse if a plenteous sharing in the gifts of redemption is desired for oneself and for others. The Legion urges and implores each member to assist frequently—every day if at all possible—at Mass and at that Mass to receive Holy Communion."

" The Eucharist is the centre and source of grace: it must be the very keystone of the Legionary scheme."

" Legionary service is based on the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ."

" Legionary duty requires of each Legionary: first the punctual and regular attendance at the weekly meetings of the Praesidium, and the furnishing there of an adequate and audible report on the work done; second, the daily recitation of the Catena; third, the performance of a substantial active Legionary work in a spirit of faith, and in union with Mary, in such fashion that in those worked for and in one's fellow members, the person of Our Lord is once again seen and served by Mary, His Mother; fourth, the preservation of an absolute secrecy in regard to any matter discussed at the meeting or learned in connection with Legionary work."

"As a principle, every Praesidium should be doing some work which can be called heroic."

"The visitation of homes has traditionally been the preferred work of the Legion, its special occupation everywhere, its avenue of greatest good, the apple of its apostolic eye."

"It is the duty of each Legionary to gain auxiliaries and to try to keep in touch with them."

"Active work must be done."

"Material relief must not be given."

"Legionary visitation must not be regularly utilised for the collecting of money."

"The essence of religious work is its desire to reach every individual."

"No one is too bad to be uplifted; none too good."

"A vague apostolate is of little value."

"Visitation should be carried out in pairs."

"The work is to be appointed and controlled by the Praesidium."

"In each one worked for the Legionary sees and serves Christ."

"Every door opens to the humble and respectful Legionary."

"The Legionary must not sit in judgment."

"The intimate nature of Legionary work must be safeguarded."

"There need never be discouragement."

"The mark of the Cross is the sign of hope."

"Success is a joy; failure only a postponed success."

"The Legion must be in the forefront of the Church's battle."

"The Legionary must propagate everything Catholic."

"The Legion must direct itself to the individual soul."

"The rule is short—spread abroad the reign of the Sacraments and the popular devotions and sin will melt away before you."

"Infinite patience and sweetness must be lavished on a priceless soul."

" The Church has no other reason for its existence than to extend over the earth the Kingdom of Christ and so to render all men sharers of His saving Redemption."

" The Faith must be brought to the notice of every person outside the Church."

" The approach to be really effective must be an individual and intimate one, like to that which the Divine Shepherd would make in such a search."

" There must be nothing of the controversial, nothing overbearing. Every word must breathe humility, affection, sincerity. Actions as well as words must show forth one essential thing, they are backed by genuine belief."

" We must always remember that religion is caught, not taught."

" Naturally and supernaturally the repudiation of impossibility is the key to the possible."

" Every impossibility is divisible into thirty-nine steps of which each step is possible."

" No matter what may be the degree of difficulty a step must be taken and that step should be as effective as it can be."

" The aim in all discussion should be to make those outside the Church catch a glimpse of the treasures which are within."

" Souls are not approached except with Mary."

" The purpose of the Legion is to mirror Mary. If true to this ideal, the Legion will share her crowning gift to cast light into the hearts of those who are in the darkness of unbelief."

" Each convinced Catholic, however imperfect his knowledge, has a certain mental picture of his faith, and possesses the capacity to convey this impression to the mind of another whom he seeks to influence. But he will not exercise that capacity unless moved thereto by force of organisation or other strong impulse."

" The Legion of Mary, depending for its very life on devotedness to Mary and imitation of her, must be full of charity; then only will it bring charity to the world."

5

THE HANDBOOK

THERE are many reasons why the Legion of Mary has developed in such a unique way since its foundation. One of them is surely the excellence of its *Handbook*. In this book is enshrined the essence of the Legion system, which is not only a means of undertaking apostolic work but a way of life designed to result in a high degree of holiness. Men eminent in the Church have stated their opinion that the *Handbook* of the Legion of Mary is one of the greatest manuals of practical spirituality ever to be written in the whole history of the Church. Even by Legionaries it is not valued as it ought to be.

Let us see what the *Handbook* contains. Incorporated in the Constitution of the Legion of Mary are valuable pages on the nature and dignity of the lay apostolate. Tucked away in unexpected places, for example in the pages which deal with objections which may be anticipated, are many gems of practical wisdom. One finds, too, outlined in great detail, the rules for the government and organisation of the Legion throughout the world. There are chapters of sound doctrine and high spirituality dealing with devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Trinity, the Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament, the mystical Body of Christ, symbolic action, the seeking of conversions to the Church and the practice of most of the basic virtues of the spiritual life. In addition are many precious quotations from Catholic writers of all the centuries. There are pages, too, explaining the technique of apostleship, the method of visiting, the running of a meeting, the giving of reports, the attitude towards criticism, missionary work, and a host of similar matters.

Just because the *Handbook* is our rule book, we Legionaries are under an obligation to study it. How can we observe the rule unless we know it? How can we claim grace as Legionaries unless we are observing the rule? So

study of the *Handbook* is one of the first duties of every member.

We cannot stress too often that everything in the *Handbook* is the result of experience. The writer claims that it contains in briefest possible compass what it is important that every properly equipped Legionary should know of the principles, the laws, the methods and the spirit of the organisation. Unless the system is known, it cannot be worked properly. The more we know about it the more we will love it and the more efficiently we will work it.

One hears from time to time the criticism that the *Handbook* is too long, too detailed and too difficult. How seriously should we take the objection that a book, which is meant to be a guide to life, is too long? How much time is spent in reading the secular newspapers, looking at television, listening to the radio or in similar activities? Is it too much to ask that a devoted Legionary reads just one page of his *Handbook* a day? Thus we would cover the whole book in a year.

Others say that the *Handbook* is too detailed. Surely a zealous Legionary will want to know in as much detail as possible all about a system which has proved so immensely successful everywhere in the world. To quote the *Handbook* itself: " Would the serious student of the country's laws, of medicine, or of military science, apply such words to a textbook of only similar size which embodied all that he was expected to know concerning the particular science he was studying? Far from saying or thinking so, he would in a short week or two have committed to memory every idea, every word even, contained in such a treatise."

More often is heard the argument that our *Handbook* is full of difficult ideas and advanced matters which are beyond the understanding of the younger and simpler members. Therefore why not have a simplified *Handbook* for such as them? To those who contend in this way, we reply with a reminder of the first principle of education, which is that the pupil be gradually led on into unknown territory. Where is education if a person understands in

advance everything he is intended to learn? When new things are no longer proposed to his mind his education has stopped. Why should Legionaries expect to understand the *Handbook* immediately any more than a schoolboy be expected to understand at first sight his textbook in French or mathematics? The school's job is to use the textbook and to explain everything in it which is not clear.

Those who complain that the words in the *Handbook* are difficult will help their own education very much by studying it with the aid of a dictionary. As a matter of fact it is not all that difficult. My own personal experience over many years has been that it is quite possible to explain the *Handbook* to young people in their teens so that they acquire a knowledge of it equal to that of members of the senior Legion of Mary. Are we to say that the *Handbook* has not been successful all over the world, that it has been too difficult for Legionaries in Africa or China, America or the Philippines?

The words and the ideas in our *Handbook* are neither difficult nor too obscure. Ordinary simple people everywhere have grasped them and made them the very food and fibre of their lives. They are necessary ideas, too. If the apostolate is to be undertaken adequately, these ideas must be known and understood. They are the very life of apostleship, the common principles that guide it. Unless they are understood, apostleship is deprived of its true meaning. It would be a surface thing without any deep spiritual roots, resulting in a vague campaign of doing good, which is as different from the true Christian apostolate as heaven is different from earth.

The Praesidium is the teacher of all its members. Ideally, spiritual reading, *allocutio* and *Handbook* study should be co-ordinated. Moreover, every item of active work must be linked with its appropriate section in the *Handbook* and thus understood doctrinally and spiritually.

Unless we do our *Handbook* study systematically, we will not do it at all. Many methods are used for this. One

of the best is for the Spiritual Director, the President or any member of the Praesidium to set each week a number of questions on the section which is to be studied. They are numbered, the number depending on the length and content of the section. Each question is written on a small slip of paper. They are then put into a bag with, if necessary, a number of blank papers, so that each member can draw a paper from the bag. The questions are answered in order and, if time permits, discussed. Perhaps we can adopt this method in future.

We should not regard *Handbook* study as a burden. We should be genuinely enthusiastic for it, anxious to learn as much as we can about the wonderful society to which we belong.

(Note: Legionaries who are really enthusiastic will supplement their *Handbook* study by further reading. They will find two collections of articles by Mr. Frank Duff particularly helpful: *Walking with Mary* and *Mary Shall Reign*. Both are published by J. S. Burns and Sons, Glasgow, at 7s. 6d.)

6

"YOU MUST ACCEPT THE WHOLE"

A CHARACTERISTIC of the Legion of Mary since the beginning has been its insistence on adherence to the rules contained in its *Handbook*. Most Catholic societies have just a few basic rules to guide the members. Much is left to individual choice. The Legion of Mary has a *Handbook* which is one of the most precious compositions of the twentieth century Church. From start to finish it is full of practical wisdom. Perhaps its value lies in the fact that it was never a theoretical composition but a photograph in words of what was actually taking place. Over the years it has grown from a simple outline into the manual of over three hundred pages with which we are familiar to-day. Not a word has been added which is not based upon

experience. That being so, we can easily understand why we are told that we are not at liberty to vary rules and practices as we choose.

Our *Handbook* describes the authentic system of the Legion of Mary. Any variation means a departure from authenticity. In so far as a Council or Praesidium departs from the instructions of the *Handbook*, it ceases to be the authentic Legion of Mary. Since the Church has approved of the Legion as it is depicted in the *Handbook*, departures from the system inevitably mean a departure from obedience to the Church and consequent loss of grace. Legionaries are entitled to grace in virtue of the Church's approval of their organisation. If the local version of that organisation is different from that approved by the Church then the title to grace is forfeited in proportion.

We are all familiar with the saying: "The thin edge of the wedge." Very often the edge is not so very thin and it is inserted quite a long way. One variation leads to another, a second to a third, a third to a fourth. Such is human nature. The final outcome is an organisation which bears the name of the original but has little resemblance to it in fact. Even though this new creation of local manufacture does valuable work, it is not doing it with the blessing the Church gave to the Legion of Mary. For it is simply not the authentic Legion of Mary.

The Legion has developed in a most wonderful way all over the world. This steady development has demonstrated that its Constitution is adaptable to circumstances which exist anywhere in the Church. Think of the Legion at work in the cities of the United States of America and the same organisation at work in the new mission fields of Nigeria. Think of Legionaries in Rome, Paris or Berlin, and contrast their sphere of apostolate with those of their fellow Legionaries in the teeth of Communist persecution in China or in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation. It is facts like these which prove our point. The system of the Legion of Mary is in itself quite capable of

coping with circumstances anywhere in the world. There is no need for special legislation for special cases or special places. Those who are genuinely convinced in conscience that the Legion of Mary as set out in its *Handbook* needs modification for the circumstances in which they intend to operate should not start the Legion of Mary, but another organisation. They are certainly not entitled to the name of the Legion of Mary unless the whole rule is observed.

The sad situation could easily occur when a modified version of the Legion could exclude the genuine article or result in much misunderstanding of the idea of the Legion. Suppose the modified version were to fail, is it not likely that the rumour would go round that the Legion of Mary could not work in that place? People who lived there might well move elsewhere and carry abroad with them the false idea of the Legion. Just as those outside the Church very often criticise a caricature of the Church when they think they are criticising the Church itself, so those who are unfamiliar with the Legion may well criticise a caricature or counterfeit of it by thinking they are criticising the Legion itself. It is sad indeed if such criticism arises because caricatures and counterfeit versions actually exist.

Clever men think they can pick parts from the original and weld them into a new composite. They may do so but the resulting creation will never possess the sweetness and inspiration of the original society, which has developed as a result of hard-won experience in work for souls all over the world. You cannot cut out pieces from a living body and put them together and make another living body. As the *Handbook* rightly says, the result of this species of surgery is usually a corpse.

Let each of us, then, be renowned for our fidelity to the *Handbook*. If we notice any deviation or breaking of rules it is our duty to draw the attention of our officers to it. The Councils of the Legion have a special responsibility in this matter. As Newman says: " You must accept the whole, or reject the whole."

7

PRINCIPLES FROM OBJECTIONS

IN our *Handbook* we will find a section headed "Objections which may be Anticipated." Perhaps the objections themselves are not heard as frequently now as they were in the early days of the Legion, because the most effective answer to them is the success of the Legion of Mary itself. But the answers given in the *Handbook* contain perfect gems of apostolic wisdom. Let us think about some of them.

We learn, for example, that in every place, without exception, there is vital need for an intense apostolate. For this there are many reasons. Apostleship is an integral part of Catholic life. A Catholic who is not an apostle is not fulfilling an essential duty. Therefore, the opportunity to be trained as an apostle and to have one's apostolic efforts directed into the most effective channels should be offered to everybody in every place. Even in the most Catholic communities, ingenuity will soon devise apostolic works of very great value. The good can always be made better. Practically everywhere there is scope for such works as the systematic distribution of Catholic books and other literature, for activities designed to promote Catholic or native culture, for the organisation of entertainment with a social and cultural value, and so on. I know of several country districts in which the outlook of the people has been revolutionised in a most healthy way by the coming of the Legion of Mary. Religion must never be allowed to settle down to the level of routine. Few things are so harmful. Again, in every place there are those who are in need of special attention, the aged, the sick, the mothers with big families, those subject to temptations and some who may be liable to stray from the one true fold. Work can and should be organised for everybody. A parish without organised apostleship may well be a paralysed unit in the Body of Christ.

A little further on we read: "Every office, shop, and place of work holds potential Legionaries." The Catholic doctrine that everybody is called to be an apostle according to capacity implies that ordinary people are quite capable of doing good work in apostolic organisations. The Legion of Mary is particularly suited for this. It has developed a magnificent way of training, according to which the new member is almost imperceptibly led on to higher things, being trained through the inter-play of works, reports, spiritual reading, *allocutiones*, discussions and the rest, in holiness, knowledge and the technique of apostleship. It is never the mind of the Church that rules of entry into the ranks of lay apostles should be such as would exclude any large numbers.

Another golden principle is stated in these words: "The home is spiritually the strategic point. To hold the home is to capture society. To win the home one must go to it." That is why home to home visitation is the stable and favourite work of the Legion of Mary. There may be a few difficulties but they are never so real as to justify the visitation being discontinued. In fact experience has taught that the greater the difficulties the more desperate is the need for visitation.

Answering the suggestion that apostolic work may deprive us of necessary leisure, our *Handbook* makes the valid point that many people do not devote their leisure time to genuine rest but to amusement which is more or less disordered. The suggestion is also made that if life alternates between a day of toil and an evening of pleasure the result may well be a drift into a practical materialism. Once this happens, hearts are left without an ideal, having been sadly disillusioned by the inevitable discovery that lasting satisfaction can never be found in worldly pleasures. St. John Chrysostom tells us that he never succeeded in persuading himself that anyone could achieve salvation who had never done anything for the salvation of his brethren. The way to keep the heart, and the face too,

serene and young, is to devote at least a couple of hours a week of one's free time to genuine apostolic work.

A little later on the point is made that in order to accomplish anything worthwhile through apostolic work, it must be carried out based on a definite spirituality, a definite programme of prayer, a definite weekly task and a definite weekly report, and always in union with Mary. Definite accomplishment can come only from a definite system. A vague idealism which appeals to members in a general way to do good in their surroundings will never result in anything more than the vaguest results. Work should be done adequately and systematically or not at all.

Nor ought we to pay much attention to the suggestion that works of intimate personal contact are beyond the place and scope of the laity. In these days when priests are few and excessively occupied with administrative tasks, the Church must still approach all her members and those outside whom God calls to the one true fold. Saint Charles Borromeo used to say that one soul was diocese enough for a Bishop. He was more than right. Over the last forty years the Legion of Mary have proved that it can help the priest in an immense variety of ways. It supplies him with zealous representatives, multiplies his personality, obeys his every word, gains access to individuals and families sometimes when he is unable to do so. is strengthened by the knowledge that its members are responding to the appeal of the Vicar of Christ for apostles among the laity and that they aspire to the perfection of the spirit of Mary. Canon Guynot was perfectly correct when he wrote: " The Legion of Mary brings to the priest two blessings of equal value; first, an instrument of conquest which bears the authentic mark of the Divine Spirit —I shall ask myself the question: have I the right to neglect such a providential weapon? Secondly, a spring of living water capable of renewing our whole interior life— and I shall be brought naturally to a further question: if this pure and deep spring of life is offered to me, is it not my duty to drink of it?"

8

LOYALTY AND OBEDIENCE

THE Legion of Mary is a closely-knit organisation. Hundreds of thousands of people, even millions, if we include all the auxiliary members, are united in the one purpose of bringing Christ to the world through Mary. That is the idea of organisation, to make many into one. Every member, anywhere in the world, is connected with every other member. Every Praesidium is connected with every other Praesidium, every Curia with every other Curia. And all are connected with the supreme governing body, the Concilium. Life flows through these connections, from the Concilium down to the smallest and most remote Praesidium and from Praesidia all over the world to the Concilium, and from unit to unit everywhere. There is a ceaseless flowing of life in every direction. You can see at once that this depends upon the connections being maintained. If there is a break, life does not flow, any more than electricity will come into your home from the power station when the connection is not made through switching on.

The *Handbook* tells us that the cement of this connection is loyalty. It is loyalty which preserves the union; the loyalty of the member to the Praesidium, of the Praesidium to its Curia, of Curia to Senatus, and of Senatus to the Concilium; and of every unit of the Legion, large or small, governing or governed, to the authorities of the Church everywhere. On this point our rule is very clear. We are not allowed to act independently. When we are in doubt or when a new, difficult situation arises or there is question of some brand new work or novel departure, we must consult the appropriate authority for guidance and permission.

Loyalty bears fruit in obedience. You cannot really understand obedience unless you have deep faith. Adam sinned because he wanted to rule. That was Original Sin—

the desire to rule. Original virtue, then, is the will to serve. We see it all through nature. Laws are obeyed by inanimate things. The stone thrown into the air falls down again. The tide comes up at a certain time. The plant turns its leaves to the sun. Clouds follow the currents of the wind. Chemistry, physics and all science are regulated by well-known laws. A man who refuses to obey is out of line with the whole of nature. But nature is blind and man is not. Man is a reasonable, free being. He knows that he ought to obey legitimate authority and recognises that obedience never weakens personality nor lowers human dignity. There is really no such thing as blind obedience. We obey because we recognise the authority of God in all those who are over us and follow the example of Christ.

Jesus was the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He could have dispossessed the Roman Emperor. He could have displaced the Jewish High Priest. But he chose to obey His humble creatures, Mary and Joseph. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death. He was exalted because of His obedience. He even acknowledged Pilate's authority over His life, saying that it was given Him from above. Still He obeys His priests, even though they be unworthy, at Mass and in administering the Sacraments. We who are other Marys must learn of Him and obey.

The way in which authority was to be exercised in the Church was determined by God Himself and by no mere man. Christ gave His authority to St. Peter and the Apostles. It has been passed on from them to the Pope and the bishops. They exercise it still in the Church. Their will is Christ's will. So the Legion of Mary is officially authorised by the Church, that is, by Christ. Obedience to the Church is obedience to Christ. The Officers of the Legion, when they act according to the Constitution printed in the *Handbook*, make known Christ's will to the members. They should be obeyed as Christ would be obeyed. If there are good reasons for believing that they are wrong, the member should point this out in a humble, respectful way,

remembering that Christ Himself must be seen in every member and respected in each.

The main purpose of obedience is to unite our wills with God's. It takes for granted that the man in authority, be he bishop, parish priest, spiritual director or legitimate officer, is trying to see what is the divine will for all those under him. We must believe that God gives those in charge of us guidance. This is what we call the grace of state. So in the Legion we are called upon to obey. The test of obedience is to accept situations and decisions which are unpalatable and to accept them cheerfully. The *Handbook* leaves us in no doubt, saying: "The Legion expects from its children everywhere that spirit of heroic and sweet docility to proper authority of every sort."

The Legion is Mary's army. It must never be surpassed in soldierly qualities by even the finest of worldly armies. These are famous for their spirit of loyalty and exact obedience. We of the Legion may not be called upon to undertake long route marches or to face poison gas or nuclear weapons. But we have to submit our wills to the wills of others. That may seem like spiritual death at times but we must submit to it when authority requires. Our feelings, our judgment, our independence, our pride, our will, may in the course of our Legionary life suffer wounds of contradiction, but if we bear them gladly we will rise gloriously to the high things of the spirit.

We must maintain the connections in the Legion. Officers must keep their Praesidia informed of what happens at the meeting of the Curia. Likewise the Praesidium must keep the Curia duly informed by its reports of what it is doing and how it is doing it. A Curia cannot guide and help a Praesidium which is less than frank in its reports, makes things more glowing than they really are, covers up failures, hides deficiencies, and so on. Any lack of honesty is failure in loyalty and obedience. The ideal is that any Legionary anywhere should be familiar with the workings of the whole Legion throughout the world. From the

Concilium, for example, come reports of the monthly meeting. They go out all over the world to depending governing bodies. The essence of these should be passed on right down so that every Praesidium and every member of every Praesidium is aware of it. Routine will not enter in where there is this lively interest in the progress of the Legion everywhere in the world. We must realise that we are one body, bound together by the virtue of loyalty which bears the rich fruit of obedience. If we see the whole army at work all over the world, this will be much easier. Officers have a serious responsibility, then, to see that a connection is maintained. Time spent at the meeting in reporting on what happened at the Curia is not time wasted, and what happened at the Curia includes the news from higher Councils. Finally a quotation from the *Handbook*: "The Legion's life-line can be sundered by more than wilful disobedience. The same result is achieved by the officers whose neglect of the duties of attendance or correspondence cuts off their Praesidia or Councils from the main tide of Legionary life. The same deep harm is done by those, whether officers or members, who attend their meetings, but whose attitude there—for whatever cause—is calculated to promote disunion."

9

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

FAITH is defined as belief. Catholic faith means that we accept all that God has revealed simply on His authority. From the start the Legion of Mary has stressed the importance of faith in its system. No edifice is stronger than its foundation and faith is the foundation of the Legion. Legionaries try not only to believe, but to believe so firmly, so realistically, so vividly that the truths of the Catholic religion not only dominate their lives but enter into them in the most practical and detailed way. Our

concluding prayer gives us some idea of the qualities our faith ought to have. It was composed in essence by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort and has been marvellously adapted to the needs of the Legion. Here are the qualities which we pray will distinguish our faith. It will be full, lively, animated by charity, firm as a rock, courageous and like a pillar of fire.

Our faith must be lively, that is, active, animated, vivacious. There must be a certain briskness, alertness or energy about the way in which we apply eternal truths to our lives and especially our apostolic work. We should be inspired by the consciousness that God is with us and that therefore we are all powerful, with nothing less than His divine omnipotence at our disposal. This will show itself in ardour, enthusiasm, and eagerness, all of them expressed in genuine zeal for souls. A lively faith is a keen faith, agog and on tiptoe for opportunities to do good for God, the Church and souls. With this kind of faith Legionary life becomes exciting, bustling but never bitter or fanatical. The Legionary is always alert, at the ready, prepared to spring into action, or as somebody else has put it, " to dash through thick and thin."

The soul of our faith must be charity. Mere belief could be quite dead. But belief, inspired, animated by true love of God, becomes a mighty force which will conquer the world. The man of faith knows that God, souls, the Church and eternity are the great realities, and he directs his love accordingly.

Our faith must be firm and immovable as a rock. It must not change with every passing mood or whim. It must be governed always by the same irrevocable principles revealed by God. There is nothing flabby or loose about a Legionary's faith. It is compact and consistent. No matter what happens, no matter what crisis crops up, faith still remains the same. Even if it has been disturbed, it returns at once, as it were, to its original shape. To doubt, it shows itself impenetrable. It knows that God is there

with all His infinite power and love, willing the salvation of every man. Firm faith is adamant; it never surrenders. It is as hard as steel when the temptation to give in presses upon it. No matter what stress it is called upon to endure, it is always able to fall back upon God. Legionary faith is not the flimsy, hollow, flabby, sleazy, flaccid caricature which so often masquerades for faith in the world to-day. This is little more than sentiment and will never withstand the attacks of temptation. Nor will it ever be sufficient support for apostolic work which is really and persistently heroic. That is what the Legion demands and we aspire to a faith which will be worthy of it.

Legionary faith is courageous. Courage signifies firmness of mind or purpose, bravery, mettle, spirit, resolution, tenacity, a casting aside of fear. It means that we summon all our powers in order that what we believe to be God's will may be achieved. Legionaries are convinced people; they have the courage of their convictions. Their will in the battle against sin is unconquerable. They never submit to timidity or yield to human respect. They meet strain and stress like the finely tempered blade of a sword. When failure comes, they are resilient; when faced with the disinterestedness of co-operators, they are ardent; when others wrongly counsel surrender, they are fearless; when compromise is weakly suggested, they are gallant. Their faith shows itself always in the spiritual vigour associated with genuine sanctity. Legionaries are men and women of spirit. Against the powers of darkness, they hold their own because they know that God is with them. Against the falsehoods of the world, they assert their principles because their faith tells them that they are true. When others tend to despair, they keep up their morale because they know that their cause is the only one really worth dying for. When they are unduly frustrated, they persevere because they know that Christ kept on keeping on. In the battle for Christ they are resolute of purpose and firm of mind; they are determined to achieve their objective in spite of

opposition from Satan, interferences from men or circumstances of danger. All this comes from courageous faith. It implies stubborn persistence and unwillingness to acknowledge defeat. Legionary faith is bold and audacious, dauntless and intrepid, valiant and heroic. Those were the qualities that brought its glorious Queen to the foot of the Cross of Calvary. We must pray for the faith like hers.

10

THE FRUIT OF FAITH

THE Legion of Mary aspires after all her virtues, but above all after her faith, that virtue which has in her alone been found in its utmost extent and never equalled. Faith is belief. It is neither emotion nor trust, although, of necessity, it leads to trust.

There are some articles of faith which are particularly important to Legionaries. In the first place comes belief in the Godhead of Christ. How we take that for granted! Yet what a privilege it is for us to be called upon to carry divine gifts to men. For that is what the Godhead of Christ means. His every word, every deed, every gift is divine. Nothing was without a purpose in His life. Our privilege is to carry those divine things to the world. When we tell others what we believe as Catholics we are speaking divine truth. When we draw them to the treasures of the Church we are drawing them to divine gifts. When we try to convert them, we are leading them to submit to divine authority. So with everything. All springs from belief in the Godhead of Christ.

So must it be with our belief in God's Providence. Nothing happens apart from it. And it is always the work of infinite Love. What a consolation that ought to be in our visiting! We come across so many people who are apparently the victims of the sins of others. We have to

convince them that while God does not will sin, He permits others to suffer from it. What God permits, limitless Love permits. Therefore the true Legionary, with faith in his heart, is a messenger of divine love. The thought of it is dominant in his life and in his work.

A Legionary believes in a practical way in the infinite power of God. We know that God is with us in our work. The Holy Spirit has said that God wills every man to be saved. During His earthly life Christ used miracles to convince men of His mission. He still uses physical miracles at such places as Lourdes. But we must expect spiritual and moral miracles to follow our work. We must not assess it in a commercial way. We must believe that just as, long ago, Our Lord multiplied a little boy's loaves and fishes, so He will multiply the efforts which we make to save souls. We must believe that we have at our disposal nothing short of the all-powerfulness of God Himself.

Legionary faith also convinces us that we are official representatives of Christ's mystical Body, the Church. When we work as Legionaries special graces are at our disposal. That is another way of saying that we are not alone. God is with us; His Blessed Mother is with us.

Yet again, faith teaches us that Our Lord must be seen in all whom we encounter, especially in our priests, our fellow Legionaries and all those for whom we work. We must be other Marys, knowing, loving and serving Christ in His members. Therefore faith leads to reverence, regard, respect, esteem and even admiration. There are few people in whom God's Mother would not find something to admire.

In our Officers Legionary faith sees the authority of Christ Himself. Theirs is the responsibility of passing on to all the members the wishes of the Church. No Praesidium may be formed or function without the authority of the Church. The Officers have the responsibility of maintaining fidelity to the Constitution of the Legion. If they fail to do that, they are failing the Church, which is

Christ. Praesidia are approved as units of the Legion of Mary and not as independent groups of apostles. The Church takes it for granted that they will work according to the officially approved rules and not manufacture their own or dispense themselves at will.

Finally, Legionary faith remembers that it must have recourse to the means of grace left by Christ to His Church, especially the Sacraments.

11

FAITH UNFAILING

How often do you think about that saying in the *Handbook*: "The call of the Legion is for a service without limit or reservations?" How many of us are prepared to give such service? Yet we are told that it is necessary that we should give it. Unless we aim at excellence, we will not persevere in membership. If our target is lower, we will eventually succumb to the temptation of thinking that our work has not been worthwhile. We will see nothing for our efforts. We will give up.

Every item of Legionary duty must bear that same seal of persevering effort. Effort means exertion, pains and trouble. We must remain conscious that we are toiling or straining with God's grace and in union with Mary to achieve noble purposes. Effort must be always constant, always supreme. When we are about our Legion work we should be absorbed in it and by it. We should not be niggardly in measuring the amount of physical or mental energy that is needed to produce the desired result. Effort implies exertion, exercising our powers and our faculties, our memory to recall lessons from the past and our ingenuity to think out our methods of approach which may be successful. How men exert themselves to be perfect in worldly affairs! The concert artist, the violinist or the pianist, the opera singer, the famous actor, the acclaimed athlete—how they all apply themselves to their work.

Should the exertions and application and efforts of Mary's soldiers be less sustained? Persistence in the Legion means toil, inconvenience, trouble and pain. Think of the skill and pains which are lavished upon material things, upon clothes and food and ceremonial robes and advertisements and works of art. Is our Legionary work worth less than those? We must not tire easily of the work we are doing. The modern world is always looking for change. Legionaries must hold firm. Indeed our rule gives us that as an unchanging watchword and tells us that it must ever ring in our ears: "Hold firm."

Our will to win must be unconquerable. If it is, our efforts will be sustained and our achievements real. That means that we must not accept defeat nor even court defeat by grading items of work in terms of the "promising," "unpromising," hopeless," and so on. No priceless soul is in a hopeless state. God does not will that. He wills every soul to be saved. He may will that salvation comes through the efforts of the Legionaries of His Mother. When we cannot see immediate results of our efforts, we must not be discouraged, still less abandon our work. God does not work in our way. He has summoned us to work for Him. We do our best. But the results are His concern.

Let us form the habit of refusing to label cases as hopeless. Unless we do, we will always be asking ourselves whether our efforts are justified. Doubts like that paralyse action. Every case must be approached in the spirit of optimism which springs from divine grace and deep faith. If we doubt whether our efforts are worthwhile, we will soon find ourselves reduced to the natural level. We will be timid, dominated by fears and apprehensions, shrinking from actions or activity which require independence, decision and holy self-assertiveness. We will be without the courage, daring and enthusiasm which ought to be hallmarks of our Legionary spirit. Human respect will soon dominate us. Our work will become casual and half-hearted. To offer such to our Queen would be shameful indeed.

Intensity of purpose, unwavering faith, unrelaxed effort, unquenchable love, and steady discipline are vital Legionary qualities. Our spirit must be intense, that is, ardent and fervent. We must know our purpose and never deviate from it by so much as the breadth of a hair. Our faith must not waver. We know the supernatural values which ought to guide us and we must never allow ourselves to be dominated by any less elevated principles. Our efforts must be unrelaxed. There must be nothing slack, half-hearted or haphazard about them. Our love must never falter. God's love will inspire us and the love of men will drive us on. Both must be as perfect as we can make them. Our discipline must be steady. By work which is controlled and directed we will achieve our objective, but we must persevere under discipline, never deviating in the slightest degree from the spirit of obedience either to our Officers or to our rule.

Never must we lose heart. If success comes to us, we thank God for it, but our apostolate does not depend upon it. When failure threatens us, we fight it. When it comes, we are not dismayed by it but we fight on and eventually we will succeed in wearing it down. The more worthwhile our work is, the more difficulties it will encounter, but the Legion of Mary has thrived upon difficulties and bred faith out of monotony. The heart of the Legion is for the impossible. Nothing is too big for its efforts, nothing too mean. But for everything, the big and the mean, it has the same minute attention, the same inexhaustible patience, the same inflexible courage, the same golden tenacity. We are always on duty for souls, carrying the feeble through their weak moments, surprising the hardened in their moments of softness, never leaving off in our search for those who have strayed. Such is the service without limit or reservations which the Legion demands. And the Legion only demands it because its spirit is the spirit of Mary herself.

12

GOD AND HIS LOVE

THE Legion of Mary is built on a profound faith in God and in the love He bears His children. We must believe that God is with us at our work. He sees us giving up our leisure time to attend our meetings. He sees us braving the cold and the wet to perform our weekly work duty. Dare we believe that the God Who loves us so much will leave us alone? Is He not already drawing great glory from these poor efforts of ours? We know that they are tarnished, impure and far from perfect. But we are giving them to God through His lovely Mother. He and she will surely purify them and make them fruitful.

God and Mary are not just watching us at our work. We only do the work because of divine grace which God has given us through His Blessed Mother. No results follow from our efforts apart from that same grace. We are working for God, and surely it is reasonable to believe that the success of our work is more by far to Him than it is to us. We want a conversion. God wants it infinitely more than we do. The primary purpose of our membership of the Legion is that we sanctify ourselves. God yearns for our holiness infinitely more than we yearn for it. Thus in our work of sanctifying ourselves through working for others, it is essential that we remember that God is with us. He is our Father, our Friend, our Companion. If we trust Him as we should, we will surely succeed. God will use us to conquer the world for Him.

The good Legionary is never over-anxious, nor on the other hand ever apathetic. Anxiety will show itself in worry, distress, suffering and misery. It will develop as fear, dread, apprehension, forboding, misgiving. It may even display itself as doubt, uncertainty and mistrust. All these are signs of lack of faith. Provided we are doing our best to be good Legionaries, attending our meeting, saying our Legion prayers as well as we can, preparing and giving

our reports, observing the *Handbook* to the best of our ability, we can be sure that God is with us. We must not worry about our work. While the responsiblity of Legionaries, and especially of Officers is heavy, the helps which God gives make the burden extremely light. When we are trying hard and we seem to be frustrated, we must not lose heart. The anguish of fear must not show itself in our bearing. Disappointments may be so grave that they seem rather like disasters. But God is always there. He does not want us to be anxious and worried, to fret or stew over our problems or situations or the people we meet in the course of our work. After all, they are His rather than ours. He looks after them. We do our best, and leave the rest to Him.

On the other hand, apathy is even more worthy of condemnation than excessive anxiety. It shows itself in inactivity when Christ is calling us to be active for souls, in idleness when diligence is needed, in sluggishness when enthusiasm is demanded. Apathy and the spirit of Mary are contradictory. She could never be anything but enthusiastic in the love of virtue and the battle against sin. It may be that in our work for souls we have been constantly frustrated. Success has never come our way. So we give way to faint-heartedness and lethargy. Activity becomes painful and zeal repugnant.

The remedy for all this is, of course, faith. We must repeat our acts of faith in God, His presence with us, His power, His wisdom, His love. We must remember that we are not alone. We work for God especially in union with Mary—and, oh, how she longs for the success of our work! She remembers how she stood there beneath the Cross, watching the Blood, which her Son had taken from her veins, pouring out, knowing that every drop of it was being shed for the salvation of the souls of men. Therefore how she rejoices to see people dedicated to her going out and working in union with her to bring the merits of that same Precious Blood to the souls of men. That is our privilege. We must try to be worthy of it.

13

MARY'S FAITH

LEGIONARIES aspire to be other Marys as far as possible. Above all, they imitate her faith. She believed in God's word. She knew that God is infinite Truth, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Thus she made an act of perfect surrender of her intelligence to God's word. But because of her perfection Mary's faith was less the seeing in a dark manner which ours is, according to St. Paul. Rather her faith approached as far as it could approach in a finite being on earth to the very frontiers of the direct vision of God. The rules by which she lived were the rules of God. She possessed in a most perfect degree the insight we associate with the Saints, so that she was able to penetrate to the inner meaning of God's revealed truths. What the great Saints achieved only after years of prayer and penance, she had from the very first moment. She was full of grace, according to God's messenger, at the moment she became God's mother, full, that is, according to her capacity then. But that capacity increased from moment to moment and day to day, especially as she lived in such contact with God incarnate. When grace grew, faith grew. For faith is simply grace functioning, as it were, in the intelligence.

Theologians tell us that the first grace Mary received in her soul was greater than that which was enjoyed by all the Saints and Angels assembled together in glory. If her grace was so great, how can we describe her faith? Yet her faith increased constantly. As the moments of her life passed by, so her faith grew in power until the glorious climax of her death. Then it was hardly distinguishable from the direct vision of God.

Nothing impeded the growth of the faith of the Mother of God. We are surrounded by temptations, threatened by fears of all sorts, frustrated on every side, distorted in our vision and weakened in our wills. All these things have

an effect upon faith. But they did not affect Mary's belief. In us, faith may seem to come into conflict with reason or if it does not actually come into conflict, there seems to be a tension between them. God's holy Mother saw everything with perfect clearness. She saw reason rightly but recognised its limitations. She understood how reason was perfected by faith, how faith was a kind of telescope enlarging the vision of reason. And, most of all, she was the most just of women because more than any other she lived by faith.

Mary's faith was such that she applied the rules of God to everything. That is the Legionary way. We are concerned with the supernatural things. When we are working for souls we are in the realm of grace. Therefore let us not apply to that work the rules of the world. Let us not be of the earth, earthy. Let us not mistake worldly prudence for the true supernatural virtue which takes the right means to the end, the means dictated by faith rather than by human reason.

St. Elizabeth praised Mary precisely because of her faith. " Blessed art thou who hast believed," she said. So easy it would have been for her to say, for example: " Blessed art thou because thou art the Mother of God," or " Blessed art thou because God has preserved thy virginity whilst coming to live within thee." But no, Elizabeth, no doubt inspired by the Holy Ghost, recorded words for our example. It was Mary's faith that made her blessed. She believed that with God all things are possible. When the angel made known to her that she was to become God's mother, she did not doubt. All she wanted to know was how God would do it. She knew that God would not have her be false to her vow of virginity. She trusted Him about that. How, then, could she be a mother? What means would God employ? The reward of her faith was to know that through the power of the Holy Spirit she would become the Mother of God.

May we not say, in all humility, that one of the rewards of our faith as Legionaries is that we will beget souls to

divine grace? If we approach our work really convinced of the eternal truths, we will go possessed of a supernatural conviction which will radiate itself to others. The whole of Mary's life was a ceaseless exercise of faith. Wonders succeeded one another within her and around her. She herself was a mystery, for although she was a child of Adam she was free from Adam's sin. Although she was a virgin, she was a mother. Although she was a creature she carried the Creator within her. She had been born in time, but she believed that her Child had been begotten from all eternity. The little Infant who lay seemingly helpless in the manger was Lord of the whole universe. Him whom she wrapped in swaddling clothes was the joy of the angels of Paradise. He who fled from the King of the Jews was, she believed, the King of Kings. He who was condemned to death was the Life of the World. He who stood before His earthly judges was the Judge of all men. Indeed, Mary is the living evidence of that definition of faith, the evidence of things that appear not. So must it be with us. We must guide our lives not by the maxims of worldly prudence, the things we see around us, the principles recommended by the wise men of the world who have no time for God, but we must try to emulate Mary's faith. Pray to her for the faith that moves mountains.

14

TEACHER OF APOSTLES

"BLESSED are they that have not seen and have believed," Our Lord said to St. Thomas. St. Peter, too, was blessed because he made his act of faith: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To him Christ said: "Blessed art thou Simon, son of John, because flesh and blood have not revealed this to thee but my Father who is in heaven." So throughout His life upon earth Our

Lord demanded faith. It was in response to faith that He worked His miracles. Remember the glorious prayer of the father of the lunatic boy: " Lord, I do believe, help thou my unbelief." So it was again and again. Faith was what Our Lord wanted. He blamed the Apostles when they did not possess it. So faith is required to-day.

Men talk about the eight beatitudes. They regard them as being masterpieces of human wisdom. But they cannot be understood fully except in the light of faith, by faith and through faith. Faith is the source of all the beatitudes. So should it be with us Legionaries in our work duty. We should aspire after that simplicity of vision which sees everything from the standpoint of eternity and try to radiate that around us. We will lose nothing by it. We are meant to be messengers of the supernatural. The world has more than a sufficiency of cold logical reasoning, of wearying intellectual effort. It needs to-day the simplicity of faith. In revealed truth the soul of a Legionary, like the soul of Mary, must rest and find its satisfaction almost as the beloved John leaned on the breast of Jesus. With Mary the repose of faith was habitual. A result of it was the perfect peace which always possessed her soul. Even when the sword of sorrow pierced her, she still remained peaceful. So with us, if we allow ourselves to be ruled by the principles of God's revealed truth, nothing will disturb us and in our apostolate we will radiate the spirit of peace.

Our Blessed Lady was not only the guardian, and in herself a mystery, of faith, she was the teacher of faith. When her Son had ascended into heaven, the Apostles came to her. St. Anselm tells us that many things were revealed to the Apostles by Mary. Are not the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel full of the reminiscences of the Blessed Mother? " Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart." How could she forget them—the miraculous conception of St. John, her conversation with the heavenly messenger, her visit to Elizabeth, all the startling events of Bethlehem, the Circumcision, Simeon in

the Temple, those hidden years at Nazareth, the loss and finding of her Child at Jerusalem?

So does the good Legionary keep God's truth, pondering it in his heart. He loves his spiritual reading, especially his *Handbook*, which translates many of the fundamental principles of the spiritual life into a highly practical way of apostolate. From Mary the Apostles learned. The Holy Spirit taught them, too. So we Legionaries depend upon Mary and the Holy Ghost. " No man cometh to me unless my Father who is in heaven draw him," Our Lord said. Faith is a gift. The life of faith is a favour of God. To live by faith is one of the greatest gifts God can give us. And there is something particularly appropriate in our asking for it through Mary. She was blessed because she believed. So will we be good Legionaries if we are fired by this spirit of faith.

Let us pray often about Mary's faith. The more we contemplate it the more we will be moved to imitate it and to pray for it. Doing that will lift our own faith to the degree of heroism. Soon we will find ourselves expecting miracles. We should. Legionary work may seem paltry and even foolish. Our Lady may lead us to think of St. Peter. She must have known all about the lesson in faith he received from her Son. Remember how the Twelve were in their little boat when that sudden storm threatened to destroy it and them. Then the Master came, walking on the water. Peter had to go to Him. He cried out that he must do so, walking on the water. Bravely he climbed from the boat and began the short journey. So long as he could see the Master all was well, but when a mighty wave came between them poor Peter lost faith. He began to sink. But notice, Our Lord did not rebuke him by saying: " Peter, you ought to have known better. You did something very foolish trying to walk on the sea, especially in a storm like that." Rather the Master implicitly commended him for trying to do that seemingly impossible thing, but He blamed him for losing faith: " Why didst

thou doubt, O thou of little faith?" How often will our Blessed Mother say that to us Legionaries? No case is hopeless. She is the Virgin Most Powerful. We must believe in her and never forget that through her prayers we have at our disposal nothing less than the all-powerfulness of her Divine Son.

15

WELDING ALL MEN TOGETHER

THE Legion of Mary puts an ideal before us, nothing less than a whole population organised for God. But we are told that this is no mere ideal; that it is the most practical and possible thing in the world to-day, if eyes are but uplifted and arms unfolded. Are we in our Praesidium or our Curia really lifting up our eyes to see how we can bring this about in our own area? So many examples could be given. Every year we have our September function. Do we follow out the suggestion of the *Handbook* that suitable people, not yet Legionaries, may be invited to attend with a view to inducing them to undertake membership?

Again, how are we caring for our auxiliary members? Do they know much about the Legion of which they are really and truly members? What steps are we taking to recruit them as active members? How long is it since we have organised anything for them? Such gatherings are usually called rallies, but that is not necessarily the best word. Such events could consist of an address or addresses with refreshments and entertainment. Sometimes religious films are shown.

Possibly more could be done to help the Patricians. If they are organised strictly according to the instructions and if enthusiasm is maintained by the Legionaries responsible, they are successful. Too often though, we are haphazard about our organisation and expect things to

work themselves. The difference between success and failure is usually that extra effort which is put in by enthusiastic organisers who make sure that everything that can be done is done.

We must aim at organising the whole population for God. It would help if we were to run recruiting drives for membership of various Catholic societies, such as the parochial confraternities, which still do a very useful job. May it not be possible to arrange courses of talks on Catholic doctrine for those people who are anxious to go beyond what they manage to gather from the pulpit in Church? Most Praesidia could do very much valuable work to help the apostolate of the Catholic Truth Society or corresponding organisations. In too many churches almost empty C.T.S. boxes are to be seen, or boxes containing a few dog-eared publications, which should have been removed long ago. An incidental result of work for the C.T.S., which is in itself a valuable apostolate, is an increase of funds for our regular work.

Organise the whole population for God—the very thought opens endless vistas. The whole population includes Catholics of every description as well as non-Catholics. Perhaps we can discuss soon one or more parochial pilgrimages to shrines or other places of Catholic interest? Conversions have resulted from these, for example, when a special invitation was sent to the non-Catholics married to parishioners. In a parish in the north-east of London the Legion set about organising the whole population in a vast campaign of prayer for peace. What could be more topical in these days of nuclear weapons? They had a special sign designed and printed, bearing simply the three words, "Pray for Peace." Every householder, Catholic and non-Catholic, was asked to place it in the front window and to promise to say the Collect for peace, which was printed on a card and left at the home, every day. Could we do that? Or might we think of arranging a day of retreat or lectures or merely an "at

home " in our local Convent for non-Catholics? The nuns would be delighted to take part in an apostolic venture of this sort. There are many suitable films or slides available to make it more interesting. We must arrange a parochial retreat, too. We cannot over-emphasise the value of keeping systematically in touch with every young person from the time of leaving school. If we are able to do that, the Church will never be blamed for the leakage in our district.

The above are just a few suggestions. We are failing as Legionaries unless we are continually taking action to organise the whole population for God. Our *Handbook* tells us to lift up our eyes and unfold our arms, in other words, seek the opportunities, make them, get moving, have done with inaction, banish routine. We must not leave somebody else to do it. The responsibility belongs to us. The Queen of the Legion expects us to be ever seeking to attain what our *Handbook* calls the remoter and the greater aim, which is to weld all men together in high enterprise for God. To be faithful to it is the surest way of recruiting a multitude of members for our glorious army of Mary.

16

THE DEVOTIONAL OUTLOOK

THE foundation of the Legion of Mary is profound faith in God, and in the love He bears His children. We believe in God. We believe that He is our Father. We believe that He is infinite Wisdom, infinite Love, infinite Goodness and infinite Power. We are His children. Life should be a love affair between Him and ourselves. He wants us to win souls for Him. Wanting that, He is bound to help us in our efforts. They are all contributing to His greater honour and glory. In proportion as we sincerely try to do our best He will purify our efforts and make them fruitful and persevering. He is with us all the time.

When we are visiting that lapsed Catholic, He wants the conversion far more than we do. When we are in contact with that non-Catholic He wants that person to receive the gift of faith more than we can imagine. Our efforts have been present to God from all eternity. They have been taken into account in His divine plan.

Our Lord could have arranged for men to be converted in ways known only to His infinite knowledge. The way He chose was through the efforts of other men, just as, during His earthly life, He went about like any other preacher of the day trying to convince those around Him. So our mainstay as Legionaries must be this firm belief that God is always our companion. And what a companion He is! There is nothing which He cannot do, no conversion He cannot bring about, no obstacle He cannot remove, no frustration He cannot conquer, no discouragement He cannot banish. Therefore, the principle given us by our *Handbook* is absolutely true, namely that nothing can stand in the way of success except want of trust.

Hope is the Cinderella of the theological virtues. It seems to be something that we fall back on when everything else has failed. " All we can do now is hope for the best," we say, and yet the Holy Spirit in the inspired word of God tells us that all the Scriptures were written that we might have hope and that we are saved through hope. The very essence of the message of St. Thérèse of Lisieux was living hope, trust in God's merciful love.

As Legionaries we must believe that nothing ever happens by accident. All is the work of God's love. That somebody comes to the door in response to our knock, that nobody answers in another house, the rain and the wind, the rebuffs we receive, the difficulties we have in putting up with the foibles of our fellow Legionaries—all these are meant to be occasions for the practice of the virtue of trust in God.

How little we can choose for ourselves. Neither we nor those for whom we work could choose the place or

century of our birth, our parents, our brains, our health, our beauty, most of our circumstances and the great majority of the ordinary happenings of life. Every one of them is part of the design of divine Providence. We must trust because Providence is the manifestation of the workings of infinite Love, Goodness, Wisdom and Power.

We may meet, in the course of our work, many who seem to have fallen very far away from God's love. Yet God knew what He was taking on when He created them, just as He knew it when He created us. Instead of us or them, He could have created another Saint, somebody nearly as holy as His Mother or as holy as His Foster-Father. But He did not. He willed to bring into existence that depraved person whom we are sent to visit, just as He willed to bring us into existence. He wants the honour and glory we are going to give Him for all eternity. We are bound to believe that He wants the salvation of that sinner because St. Paul tells us that God wills every man to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Therefore let us trust. Le us bear in mind the million proofs of God's infinite merciful love as He stoops down to us and all men in our weakness. He does not see us as idealised beings. He knows us through and through, exactly as we are. Therefore we must see His plan working in everything, trust Him entirely and remember that He is our companion in all our work.

17

THE HOLY GHOST

OUR Legion Promise is made directly to the Holy Spirit of God. We turn towards Him because He is the substantial Love of God. He has loved us to a greater extent than the human mind can ever hope to contemplate. His love for us is the outward expression of a divine

essence which is infinite Love. God could gain nothing by His love of us because He is already infinite in every respect. Yet He has lavished His love upon us in indescribably generous fashion.

The fact that we exist is an astonishing tribute to God's love. He knew, when He created us, that we can add nothing to His infinite fullness. He knew, also, that we would turn against Him in the sin of Adam and all subsequent sins. The only reason for God's love of us, then, is Himself. His love springs solely from Himself. That being so, no unworthiness on our part can make His love falter. His love does not depend on anything in us. In fact, whatever in us is lovable is His creation.

From all eternity Love has subsisted in the Blessed Trinity. The third Person is the substantial Love of God. When the announcing angel told the Virgin of Nazareth that she had been chosen from amongst all women to be God's Mother, he announced that the Holy Ghost would come upon her. Love descended from heaven to unite God and man in Mary. But Mary's returning love made this possible. The angel hailed Mary as the one who was full of grace. She was therefore full of love. Sanctifying grace enables us to love God in the way He loves Himself. Mary loved with all the perfection with which a human being is able to love. She returned to God as far as her limited capacity allowed His love of her. The union of the human and divine in one Person within Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit exemplifies God's plan for dealing with men.

When Our Lord took leave of His disciples, He referred them to the Holy Spirit whom He would send. The early history of the Church, written for us by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, is the story of the work of the Holy Ghost. In his first sermon at Pentecost, St. Peter applied to the Spirit of God words of the prophet Joel. After that the presence of the Holy Spirit is detected on every page. In fact the Acts of the Apostles have been called the

Gospel of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul claimed that his words before his judges were inspired by the Holy Ghost, as were his daily sermons. From the inspired pages we learn that it is the Holy Spirit who consecrates a man as a witness to Christ, who inspires the courage of the Apostles, who strengthens the martyrs, who guides the Apostles to those who need them, who chooses out the Apostles, who gives joy and certainty to those who have been persecuted, who presides over the discussions of the Church, who maps out the Apostles' journeys, guides and protects them.

Little wonder then that the Legion Promise is addressed to this mighty Spirit of Love. We ask Him to come upon us and fill us with Himself. We want our poor acts to be sustained by His power. We pray that we will become an instrument of His mighty purposes. We know that of ourselves we are nothing, but that God can create out of nothing. We believe that He will fill us with gifts to pass on to others. We profess that we are ready to submit to His influence, that we are empty of self, stripped of what is human in our outlook. We want to belong entirely to Him. Through the Holy Ghost, Mary gave Christ to the world. We humbly aspire to do just that, but in a spiritual way.

We take our Promise after our period of probation. What lies ahead we do not know. Our greatest consolation should be that we know that we are the consecrated instruments of the Holy Spirit. We will meet with many disappointments and harsh frustrations. Souls will seem to be sealed against our influence. Our arguments will appear to have no effect. Sometimes we may be cruelly hurt by the reactions of others to our efforts. But, so long as we are sincerely trying to work in union with the Spirit of God, we need have no fear. We cannot feel nor see grace. We must not value our work by human standards or try to measure it in human ways. With Mary, we bow our heads and say: " Behold the handmaid, the little willing slave, of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy

word." When she said those words she laid herself completely before God. She was ready for whatever He sent to her. Did she know that He would, in His love, pierce her soul with a sevenfold sword and cause her to be crowned Queen of all the martyrs? She will be with us in our work because she and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. Our consecration to Him is a consecration through her. So we must give ourselves to His influence according to our capacity, imitating Mary, under whose leadership we aspire to work.

18

SHE CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST

THE spirituality of the Legion of Mary might well be summarised under three headings. The first is the Holy Ghost considered as God's love stooping down to us. The second is the Blessed Virgin Mary, unique amongst all creatures, considered as human love ascending to God. The third is Jesus Christ, Our Lord, considered as the meeting place of this descending and ascending love, the bond of union between them.

When we recite the Nicene Creed at Mass we genuflect as we say, " was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary," professing our belief that this is the mystery of mysteries, the very centre of Catholic belief.

We must not think of this coming of the Holy Ghost upon Mary as being a mere passing action. It was everlastingly fruitful. An indissoluble alliance was created so that henceforward every coming of Christ must be through Mary and the Holy Ghost. If God had not become man we would not live supernaturally; we would never be able to attain the beatific vision. Every grace depends upon the Incarnation, that is, upon Mary's free consent. The angel came to announce the plan of God that was to continue

until the consummation of the world. The Son of God was to form a body for Himself, a Body which would be His other self, carrying His treasures to men until the end of time. The existence of that Body, whose life is a sharing in the divine nature and whose soul is the Spirit of God, depended upon Mary's free co-operation in God's plan, that is, upon the union of her love with the Holy Spirit, God's love. St. Leo puts it in a sentence: " The generation of Christ is the origin of the Christian people; the birth of the Head is also that of the Body."

Here are the words of St. Pius X which Legionaries should never forget: " In the chaste womb of the virgin when Jesus took mortal flesh, He took to Himself also a spiritual Body formed of all those who were to believe in Him; and it can be said that, carrying Jesus in her womb, Mary carried also all those whose lives were to be included in His life. All of us, then, who are united to Christ, are, as the Apostle said, " members of His Body, of His flesh and of His bones," and should think of ourselves as the fruit of the Virgin's womb, whence we were to issue one day in the likeness of a Body attached to its head. It is for this reason that, in a spiritual and mystical sense, we are called the sons of Mary, and that she is, on her side, Mother of us all, Mother after the Spirit, but the true Mother nevertheless of the members of Jesus Christ, that we ourselves are."

When we remember that God became man in order to die for us, we understand that His mother also had a share in our redemption. She really co-operated with her Son in obtaining supernatural life for us. We believe as Catholics that supernatural life is infinitely more precious than natural life. So Mary's motherhood in the supernatural order is indescribably more precious than her motherhood in the natural order. Through it we receive the life which makes us partakers of the divine nature, brethren of Christ, living temples of the Blessed Trinity and members of the Church. All this comes about through Mary and the

Holy Ghost. It was her free co-operation which made it possible for Him to bring about the Incarnation and hence the conception and birth of the Body of Christ, which is the Church of which we are members.

So in our Legionary Promise we express a profound truth when we say: " I know that Thou who hast come to regenerate the world in Jesus Christ, hast not willed to do so except through Mary." The unique function of the Holy Spirit, His special mission, was to give the Word birth in Jesus Christ. By God's will Mary took part in that. She still does so. Redemption accomplished on Calvary is continuing as long as its fruits are applied to men. The process is one. It cannot be divided. That Mary should disappear halfway through is surely unthinkable. So we profess our belief that wherever there is grace there is Mary. At every moment we depend upon grace, therefore we depend upon Mary. That enables her to see the growth of the Christ life within us. So we live in the spirit of consecration to and union with her. That is the Legionary way.

19

" WITHOUT HER WE CANNOT KNOW OR LOVE THEE "

WHEN we read Our Lord's life in the Gospels we must be struck by the fact that His Mother is brought in at all the important moments. The archangel Gabriel came to ask her consent before He was conceived. At the sound of her voice St. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost in his mother's womb. Both the Shepherds and the Magi discovered Jesus with Mary. It was she who brought the Messias to Simeon and Anna in the Temple. Our Lord's first miracle was worked and the time of His public life brought forward at Mary's request at Cana. She was

present at the foot of the Cross at the greatest moment of all time, ratifying the consent she had freely given thirty-three years before.

Let us think of our Blessed Lady's love of God. None like it ever existed in a creature. She loved to the utmost of her capacity, desiring only to be completely at the disposal of the Holy Spirit. She lived for love, was steeped in love, saturated with love. No creature was ever graced as Mary was graced because no other creature was ever chosen by God to be His Mother, nor by the Holy Ghost to be His Spouse.

Mary's love is so perfect that in its gaze she sees God and creatures at once. She does not see Him and then see us. She sees Him and us at the same time and loves us in Him. When she hears us pray, "The Lord is with thee," her whole being turns towards that Lord who is with her. That is where she is centred: in Him and only in Him. In Him she sees all creation, all the angels and all men.

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that when she consented to become God's Mother she did so in the name of all mankind. We were in that consent of hers. It was the greatest peace conference of all time. As she spoke for us then, she speaks for us now. She wants us to be like her, to consent freely to everything which God's favour offers to us. As our Mother her vocation is to carry our prayers and our wishes to the God in whom she lives. The angel said that she had found favour with God. She cannot ask Him for the slightest thing against His will. If she distributes graces it is always according to His will. Thus, dependence upon Mary moulds us into the living images of her divine Son. Living with her, acting through her and willing in her, we put ourselves in the floodtide of grace and remove all the obstacles to her motherly influence in our souls. Just as once her lovely body was the physical mould of the human body God took for Himself, so now her spirit is the mould in which all the members of her Son must be formed.

Every grace comes through Mary. To know and love God is a grace. Thus what we say in our Legion Promise is true: "I know that without her we canst not know or love Thee." If we unite ourselves with her she will lead us straight to the Holy Ghost. For we cannot be united with her without being united with Him to whom she is united.

The Church teaches, though it is not yet defined doctrine, that Mary distributes all God's graces to men, at least in the sense that we receive them all through her prayers. That would seem to follow directly as a result of the part God willed her to play in the acquisition of graces. Deliberately He willed to come to us through her. Bossuet, the French orator, said: "It is and will always remain true, that having once received the universal source of all graces through her, through her agency we continue to receive grace appropriate to every state of every Christian life. Since her motherly charity contributed so greatly to our salvation in the Incarnation, the universal source of grace, she will continue to contribute to it eternally in all those other operations which are merely dependent upon it."

There is no need for us to insist that this mediation of Mary's is subordinated to that of her Son. We all know and believe that. But her will is the same as His will. So we need have no fear of saying in our Promise: "That it is by her and to whom she pleases, when she pleases, and in the quantity and manner she pleases, that all thy gifts and virtues and graces are administered." Mary gives to whom she pleases because they are those to whom her Son wills to give grace. She gives when she pleases because that is when He pleases. She gives in the quantity and manner she pleases because she knows His will regarding the distribution of grace. All graces, not only some graces, come through Mary.

Thus we profess our faith. It is Catholic faith, and Catholic devotion to Mary simply means living according to such belief. Devotion must correspond to doctrine.

Therefore if at every moment we depend upon Mary for grace, every moment should sing its dependence upon her. Let us never forget her perfect love of God, her perfect union with the Holy Spirit and then we will understand that union with her is union with the Godhead. The more we try to live in her the more surely are we on the high road to what is, after all, the first object of our membership of the Legion, our personal sanctification.

20

"COMPLETE UNION WITH HER WHO IS SO COMPLETELY UNITED TO THEE"

OUR very first duty as Legionaries is to strive after union with our Blessed Mother. If we are united with her then with her we make progress towards holiness. Everything we do is with her. We pray with her, we make sacrifices with her, we undertake apostolic work with her, we practise all the virtues with her. How marvellous it is to immerse every thought, word and deed in Mary. Here is real devotion. Legionaries should never be satisfied with a passing invocation to their Queen, with lighting candles in her honour, with walking in processions or going on pilgrimages, nor even with mere imitation. We should aspire after union and nothing less than union.

A famous French writer, M. Olier, has stated that "the smallest share in the interior of Mary, the slightest participation in her grace, is a greater treasure than all the Seraphim and other angels and Saints ever say to God. Heaven and earth have nothing approaching this life, this wonderful interior where can be found all the worship, all the praise, all the love of the Church, of men and of angels; and a thousandfold more than all that His one whole creation can render to Him. Such are the heights of her grace and holiness. This is why greater progress is

made towards procuring the glory of God, the good of the Church and personal perfection by union with Mary than by any other practices." We of her Legion should ponder over those words until we make them our own. They should live in our minds. We must aspire after abandonment to our Mother with complete trust. To appreciate this is very simple, but it is a secret of grace.

We do not love Mary merely because we are attracted towards her. We love her because God wills that we should love her. Perfection, from one aspect, consists in loving God's will. So, if we love Mary because it is the will of God to do so, our devotion will be constant and virile. It will abide in times of desolation as well as of consolation; it will persist in spite of frustration and contradiction; it will be staunch, steadfast and loyal in spite of every temptation to abandon it. Unless it is soundly based, the quality of constancy will be absent.

When we go to Our Lord through His Mother, we acknowledge His unique holiness and abase ourselves before Him. We acknowledge our sinfulness, our impurity and, from the highest motives, are fearful of appearing before God's majesty alone. We turn to Mary. We ask her to come with us to present us to her Divine Son.

Those who have practised the devotion of union with Mary are unanimous in telling us that it leads to the way of spiritual childhood and complete abandonment to God's will. The child shows complete dependence on its mother. St. Pius X, following the Saints, goes so far as to compare our union with Mary to that of the unborn child with its mother. Could there be greater dependence than that? All we want in life is the will of God. That is the will of infinite Love. No matter how it shows itself to us, be it in frustration or contradiction, suffering or hardship, illness or affliction, it is always the will of infinite Love. To appreciate that, we unite ourselves with the perfect love of our Mother. She is utterly abandoned to the divine will. We ask to be carried along with her surrender. She will

teach us the lesson of love. In this way we will prolong the dependence of Christ during the nine months before His birth. We will live hidden spiritually in Mary. Can there be any greater privilege than that?

Mary exists to bring Christ to the world. Union with her, therefore, cannot be separated from the desire to bring Christ to the world, that is from apostleship. True devotion to Mary can never be divorced from zeal for souls. Union with her means union with her will and is there anything she wills more than that the souls should be saved for whom she saw her Son pouring forth His precious blood on Calvary? United with Mary, we will mother souls with her. Was not her destiny to give birth to Christ? Is not that precisely what we Legionaries aspire to do? That is why our first duty is to be united with the Mother of the Word Incarnate. When we approach men we know that through us Mary approaches men. Our lives must be impregnated with Mary, saturated with Mary just as the blotting paper is saturated with the ink. At our meeting she waits for us. She hears our reports. She takes part by her inspirations in the discussion of our affairs and then she sends us forth to bring her message from door to door. We can apply to our union with Mary the words of the beloved Apostle: "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Remember how St. Joseph on that first Christmas Eve went round Bethlehem knocking at doors. He was asking them to take in Mary, but he knew that if they took in Mary they would take in Jesus. So it is with us. We go as her emissaries, knowing that where she enters her Son enters too.

But we cannot be worthy of this great mission unless we are really aspiring after union with her. The grace of union is not floating about in the air to be breathed in. It will come to those who seek after it with all their hearts. The good Legionary is one who applies to his quest for the perfection of true devotion to Mary all the courage, all the enterprise, all the zeal which he is recommended to apply to every item of his Legionary life.

21

ONE WITH MARY

In that very useful book, " The Legion of Mary and the Spiritual Life," the Spiritual Director of the Concilium suggests that we should go through our *Handbook* and make a list of the many ways in which union with Our Blessed Lady ought to manifest itself in our lives. Such a list is given. We will recall it here.

The first comparison is that of the mother and the unborn child. Even this is inadequate to express the closeness of our intimacy with Mary. The closeness of the natural relationship is surpassed in so far as the supernatural life excels the natural. The *Handbook* tells us: " Other natural processes around can help to make real to the mind this place of Mary in the operations of grace. The blood is not distributed except by the heart, the eyes are the necessary link with the world of vision, and the bird—despite the beating of its wings—cannot lift itself without the support of the air; so the soul, according to the divinely established order, cannot without Mary lift itself to God or do God's work."

The next comparison is that of the slave with its mistress. Our devotion requires that we enter into a compact with Mary, giving to her our whole self with all its thoughts and deeds and possessions, both spiritual and temporal, past, present and future, without the reservation of the smallest part or the slightest little thing. We must be like slaves possessing nothing of our own, wholly dependent on and utterly at Mary's disposal. But even the earthly slave is the master of his own thoughts and his inner life. Not so the slave of Mary. He surrenders to her every thought, every movement of his soul, all his hidden riches, his inmost self. All is given to her with the humble request that she will expend it all for God. It is the sacrifice of self to God, with Mary as the altar of that sacrifice.

Here are the beautiful words of the *Handbook*: "How conformed, indeed (such a sacrifice is), to the sacrifice of Christ Himself which likewise began in Mary's bosom, was publicly confirmed in the arms of Mary uplifted in the Presentation, embraced every moment of His life, and was consummated on Calvary on the cross of Mary's heart."

Union with Mary must be a union of mind. We must try to be habitually occupied with her, bringing some thought of her into every prayer and work and act of the spiritual life, becoming so filled with the image and thought of her that we become lost in the depth of her soul, sharing her faith, her humility, her immaculate heart. If we do that, she will participate in every Legionary duty. She will mother souls through us. Well does our *Handbook* remind us that the ideal of the Legion is that we should all be living copies of Mary. We should breathe Mary as the body breathes air.

We must be united in heart also, loving what she loves, as she loves, when she loves and why she loves. We say in our promise, "Her heart and mine are one." Her love was above all for her Son, her Son in the Church, in the Eucharist, in every soul. Such love can never remain inactive. It will show itself in zealous apostleship.

Likewise we must be united with Mary in the spirit of humility. Our warfare is not of this world. We must use the tactics of heaven. In those humility plays a unique part. So it is an essential instrument of the Legionary apostolate. It is the very cradle of our actions. Where it is present, self is absent; where it is absent, self is present. It was Mary's lowliness that was exalted. So will it be with her Legionaries.

We must be united with Mary also in purpose. We must be at one with Mary's will to save the world. Oh, how Mary looks upon the masses of the human race to-day, upon the followers of her Son who are so self-centred, so apathetic, so lax, so lacking in zeal; upon all the wealthy

materialists, upon the hundreds of millions of pagans; upon those who make war on the very idea of religion. Never has there been greater need for a bold apostolate. The duty to undertake it is not optional; it is obligatory. How little the Legion asks of us—that we devote to this greatest of all causes only a few hours a week.

Our union with Mary must be union of co-operation. We must work with her in double harness, never making dependence upon her an excuse for lack of effort on our part or defects in our system. We must give our action and our faculties, all of ourselves; Mary will give herself with all her purity and power. If we give without reserve, we can be sure that Mary's donation will never be found wanting.

Finally we will aspire after union with Mary in prayer and in intention. The Apostles were persevering with one mind in prayer with Mary when the Holy Spirit came down. So it has been ever since. Let us perform every spiritual exercise living in her. As for intentions, let us have none that are not hers, for hers are the interests of the Sacred Heart. They take in every need of the Church.

22

THE "TRUE DEVOTION"

OUR *Handbook* tells us that our devotion to Mary should be rounded off and given the distinctive character which has been taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort under the titles of "The True Devotion" or "The Slavery of Mary." Honouring Mary in this way, we enter into a compact with her. We give our whole self to her, with all our thoughts and deeds and possessions, both spiritual and temporal, past, present and future, without keeping any part of anything back. We become Mary's slaves of love, utterly dependent on her and completely at her disposal. We know that all will then be disposed of according to God's will.

We begin the True Devotion by a formal act of consecration, but it consists not in an act but in a way of life. At every moment we are dependent upon Mary for grace. Grace is life. Without it we cannot breath spiritually. Our spiritual heart is unable to beat. We cannot move towards God. This grace, this life of the soul, this seed of the beatific vision, comes to us through Mary's prayers. God has willed it to be so. We acknowledge that by our act and state of consecration. Our aim is that every moment of life should sing its dependence on Mary.

How is it possible always to be thinking of our consecration? It is not possible, nor is it necessary, any more than it is possible or necessary, to be thinking about the beating of one's heart or the taking in of breath. These things go on even if we do not think about them. So is it to some extent with devotion to our spiritual Mother. Whenever we can, we think of her. Our attitude is that we are always ready to turn to her, like the flower is ready to turn to the sun. We are in a state of permanently acknowledging that we depend on her. The thought is always in our minds even though we do not think of it explicitly. At times we may derive consolation or warmth from it; more often than not it may be arid and cold. That makes no difference. The important thing is the will to live in dependence on Mary and in union with her. Feelings are not only not important, they may be highly misleading. Our honouring of Mary is based on faith, not on sentiment, on supernatural reasoning, not on emotion.

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort claimed that the Devotion he taught was an authentic message from heaven. The part it has played in the devotional life of the Church and the wonderful blessings it has brought to the Legion of Mary confirm this. Experience has proved that all that St. Louis-Marie promised to those who fulfil the conditions of his True Devotion has been given to those who were faithful to it.

In recent times many saintly people have written on this

subject. They agree that fidelity to the Devotion of consecration to Mary and union with her infallibly deepens the interior life, results in selflessness and begets purity of intention. Those who practise it know that they are being guided in a special way by their Mistress. She protects them and she uses all that they give her to the best advantage. The effort to be always united with the Mother of God results in an outlook that is unquestionably supernatural. This in turn generates courage, for one realises that works of apostolic zeal must be judged by the rules of God and not by the rules of men. Because the True Devotion is a slavery to a loving Mother, it is characterised by tenderness. Gentler qualities are awakened, such as affection, pity, kindliness, delicacy and leniency. A spirit of compassion comes also, so that one enters into the inner feelings of those who are suffering and is thus enabled quickly to show pity and sympathy. One who is striving after union with the mother love of Mary somehow or other soon begins to reflect that mother love in himself. It comes almost unknown and unrecognised, but it is surely there. An apostle endowed with this quality succeeds in making those for whom he works see that he is sincerely interested in them, sympathetic, understanding and prepared to help. This ability to enter into the lives of others and share their emotions is accompanied by a capacity for appraising or treating men and their experiences with great fairness and understanding. A warmth comes, too, a capacity for feeling and expressing love, affection, interest, or the like, with depth, ardour or fervour. The true slave of Mary is a warm-hearted person, generous, unselfish, compassionate, kind and responsive to the genuine appeals of others. All these are accompanied by a sweet humility. One who is united with Mary finds, again and again, that he is able to do works which are clearly beyond his natural merits or capacity. Sell yourself as a slave to Mary and you will receive far more than the hundredfold promised to those who despoil themselves for the greater glory of God.

23

ST. JOSEPH

IN the prayers of the Legion of Mary, the name of St. Joseph follows the invocation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He ranks next to them in the court of heaven. He is part of God's eternal plan for the redemption of the human race. A Virgin was to conceive and bear a son. To protect her from suspicion one had to be known as her spouse, to be regarded as her husband by the people. The Jews would ask concerning God incarnate: "Is not this the son of Joseph, the carpenter?" God willed to conceal from their uncomprehending, carnal minds the mystery of the virginal conception of His Son.

St. Joseph was chosen not only from amongst all the men who have lived at any time but from amongst all the possible men whom God might have created. He was chosen as head of the Holy Family. Over Jesus, who was God, he held all a father's rights. He took the place of God the Father in heaven from whom he had delegated authority over His only-begotten Son and all the necessary wisdom to make known to Him His Father's will. It was his privilege to govern, protect, feed, clothe and educate Jesus. To be the lawful superior of God—that was the vocation of St. Joseph. Just as all of us have to sanctify ourselves by the performance of the ordinary duties of daily life, St. Joseph had to become holy by caring for God Himself. From that point we can learn a lesson. Our membership of the Legion is a way of life. We see and serve Jesus in His members as St. Joseph saw and served Jesus in the flesh. We must regard our service as he regarded his—as an immense privilege.

If we ponder what the Saints have said we will understand how St. Joseph is in a special position to help us in the quest for holiness. St. Francis de Sales writes of him

like this: " If the princes of the world are most careful in choosing a tutor for their sons, taking every pains to secure the best that can be found, do you think that God, in whose hands is the formation of all men, did not select from amongst His creatures, the man who of all others was the most perfectly qualified to be the guardian of His eternal Son, the Lord of heaven and earth?" St. Bernard calls St. Joseph the most faithful helper in the Incarnation. St. Bernardine said that he is the Lord and Master of the Holy Family. The famous Jesuit theologian, Suarez, says: " He is one whose office belongs to the order of the Hypostatic Union itself."

Not only is St. Joseph foster-father of Jesus, he is also the spouse and protector of her whom the Legion is proud to acknowledge as its Queen and Leader. St. Gregory wrote: " He is the only one found worthy amongst men to be the spouse of Mary." Nor was he merely her guardian and protector. He was really and truly her husband. The marriage of these two, of Mary and Joseph, was the ideal and exemplar of all marriages, the noblest of them all, for marriage should be primarily a union of souls and minds and hearts, a spiritual union of which the fleshly union is but the outward symbol and expression. In the case of Mary and Joseph that fleshly union was unnecessary; their love of one another was so perfect that union in the flesh was in no sense needed. Of their marriage St. Bernardine of Siena wrote: " Here was a marriage of two souls bound together in the closest union. Can any reasonable person imagine that the Holy Ghost would have united to the soul of such a virgin any other soul than the one which most resembled her in all virtues and good works?" St. Francis de Sales tells us that through the union of Mary and Joseph Our Lord belonged to Joseph as He belonged to Mary, not according to nature but according to grace; for this union gave him a share in all that belonged to his most dear spouse. " Mary was like a mirror receiving perfectly into her soul the rays of the

eternal Son of Justice; the soul of St. Joseph was like another mirror opposite the first receiving perfectly into his soul the reflected rays," says the gentle doctor.

St. Joseph's holiness is proportionate to his dignity. When God calls His creatures to any vocation, He gives them the necessary graces to respond to it worthily. After Mary, St. Joseph was called to the highest honour a human creature could possess. What oceans of grace God poured into his soul!

Yet where do we find this prince of contemplatives, the holiest of all the Saints of God? In a village workshop. He was a hard-working and industrious tradesman, fashioning all the implements and tools needed by the village community and their brethren in the surrounding countryside. St. Joseph tells us that sublime holiness can be attained in any walk of life. Holiness does not consist in saying long prayers, practising severe penances, or working miracles. It is the love of God and the possession of sanctifying grace. These grow through the practice of virtue according to one's state of life. That is our first duty.

St. Joseph also teaches us selflessness and renunciation. He devoted himself entirely to the care of others. He was a man of deeds, not of words. In all that we know of him, we are not told a single word that he spoke. He is known to us as a man of action alone. So he is a marvellous example for Legionaries. We do not believe in talk, propaganda, self-advertisement, and the like. We believe in an effective apostolate of man to man, in the work of trying to pour out the love of God from our own souls into the souls of others. Can you imagine St. Joseph being careless or less diligent than he might be, slipshod or unbusinesslike? Let us take him as an example of our work. We can be sure that everything that came from his hands was as perfect as it could be. His house must have been the model of a Christian home. Externally, people would see that. Imagine the surround of it, the hedge or the fence, the garden, the paintwork, the windows—every detail would

be in perfect repair. So it should be with our Legionary work. Whenever possible we, too, should take an interest in the externals of God's house upon earth, His eucharistic home. Even if we may not satisfy our work obligation ourselves by doing manual work around the church, we might supervise the doing of it by others—painting, cleaning, sacristy work, mowing the lawns, planting flowers, caring for the burial ground and so forth.

Our *Handbook* tells us that St. Joseph continues to render to the Church the same service that he rendered to Christ, its Head. The Legion is part of the Church. He sustains it. His care of it is unfailing, vital, possessed of parental intimacy; it is second only in influence to the mothering of Mary. We should return to him the devotion he lavishes on us.

Great St. Joseph, lawful superior of God-made man, representative of the eternal Father upon earth; spouse of the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, protector of the Mother of God, teach me the great lessons of your life. Teach me that I can be holy in the world as well as in the cloister, in the cottage as in the palace. Teach me the sweet lesson of intimacy with Jesus and Mary by the practice of constant prayer; teach me the lesson of an unselfish life, devoted to the care of all the members of Christ; teach me to act rather than to say, to do rather than to speak, to do *what* I ought to do, *when* I ought to do it, *as* I ought to do it and *why* I ought to do it, that so doing I may be brought to the happiness of a death like thine in the company of Jesus, thy God and thy Child, and of Mary, thy Queen and thy Spouse. Amen.

24

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

OUR *Handbook* sets St. John before us as a model of devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He is the lover of the Church and of every

soul. He was Mary's priest and is therefore the special patron of Legionary priests.

Glance at the beloved Disciple. See in him a Galilean fisherman who wrote the most profound work which has ever been penned by human hands, the herald of love and brotherhood of his epistles who became the declamatory visionary of the Apocalypse.

The vocation of a Legionnary is to pass on the secrets of the Heart of Jesus. At the Last Supper St. John rested on the Master's breast, a fact which is recorded surely to signify that he drew thence the lesson of the love of Christ and knowledge of the deepest secrets of His spirit. Let us ask St. John constantly to reveal them to us. If we study his writings we will learn there a great deal of that spirit, which is the spirit also of Mary.

The most precious legacy Our Lord could leave was His Mother. The recipient of that legacy was St. John. In that word from the Cross, " Woman, behold thy son," Our Lord included the whole human race but especially those who by faith would attach themselves to Him. He was proclaiming what was already a fact, namely that His own Mother was the Mother of all men. He was the first-born of many brethren; His Mother was the Mother of them all. St. John represented all of Mary's new children during those hours of suffering. He was the first to enter upon the inheritance. He was a model to all who were to come after him and therefore a Saint to whom we of Mary's Legion owe very tender devotion.

Christ Himself gave St. John the nickname " Son of Thunder," perhaps in praise of his zeal or maybe as a reminder of a strain of violence in his temperament. What an honour to be known throughout Christian history as " The Disciple who Jesus loved "! He was one of the three most privileged who were present at Our Lord's Transfiguration and at His Agony in the Garden. He was chosen to go with St. Peter into the city to prepare the

Last Supper. During the meal he obtained from his Master the prophecy of who would betray Him. On Easter morning when the news came that Christ's sepulchre was opened Peter and John went there together, but John being younger, ran faster and arrived there first. A few days later, just after he had received charge of the Church from Our Lord, St. Peter asked, concerning his friend John: "Lord, what shall this man do?" Our Lord's reply gave rise to the rumour that St. John would not die but it was John himself who disposed of it by pointing out that his Master had said no such thing.

After Christ had ascended into heaven, St. Peter and St. John went up to the Temple and miraculously healed a cripple. They were imprisoned but released again. When they were told they were not to preach any more, they answered: "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." No doubt St. John was present at Our Lady's death. A tradition says that during the reign of Domitian he was taken to Rome, where an attempt to put him to death was miraculously frustrated. In banishment on the Isle of Patmos he received the revelation which he wrote down in his book called the Apocalypse. When Domitian was dead he returned to Ephesus. Many believe that he wrote his Gospel there. Its purpose was that all men might believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and have life in his name. The soaring thought of this fourth Gospel which, it has been said, is beyond human understanding ever fully to penetrate and comprehend, is aptly represented by the eagle which is St. John's symbol.

What can we learn from St. John? Firstly we will learn love of Jesus. We will love Him in Himself and read about Him in the Gospels. The more we know of Him the more we will love Him. We will love Him present in the Eucharist. It is to St. John that we owe the lovely Euchar-

istic sermon of Our Lord in the synagogue at Capharnaum. We ought to read it often in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. We will love Jesus in all our brethren. Some of the most sublime passages on brotherly love are found in St. John's writings. He it is who records the words of Our Lord: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you." In his first epistle, St. John writes: "This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ: and love one another, as he hath given commandment unto us. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no scandal in him. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death. In this we have known the charity of God, because he has laid down his life for us: as we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Let us love one another, for charity is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is charity. If we love one another, God abideth in his, and his charity is perfected in us. If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" Secondly, we must learn love for Mary, because, as we have seen, Our Lord committed her very specially to him from the Cross. Like St. John, we must court the friendship of Jesus and Mary and make ourselves worthy of it by the innocence of our lives. Thirdly, we must love the apostolate and devote ourselves to it with all our energy. Let us not spare ourselves. Let us keep our gaze fixed on life everlasting which is the only true life. Finally, like St. John and Our Lady, we must love the interior life. As St. Bonaventure says of the Beloved Disciple resting on Christ's breast: "There Our Lord fed him on the mysteries of divine wisdom abundantly, uniquely, wholesomely, profitably."

25

ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT

No Saint has played a greater part in the development of the Legion than this French missionary. He is really the tutor of the Legion. The *Handbook* is full of his spirit. The prayers re-echo his very words.

The youngest of eight children, he was born in humble circumstances at Montfort-la-Canne on 3rd January, 1673, and educated at the Jesuit College at Rennes. When he was twenty, he went to Paris to prepare for the priesthood, but he was too poor to gain admittance to the Seminary of St. Sulpice. He entered a smaller institution and whilst studying there earned a little money by night-watching over the dead. Later he moved to another establishment where the wretched food was cooked by the students themselves, so absolute was the penury. Louis became dangerously ill and had to be removed to hospital. After that he did manage to enter St. Sulpice to complete his studies. He was selected as one of the two exemplary students who went every year on a pilgrimage to one of Our Lady's shrines. He went to the Cathedral at Chartres and spent hours kneeling rapt and motionless at the foot of Our Lady's statue.

As a student he was very successful in teaching catechism to the toughest children in Paris. After a short while at Nantes, he went to Poitiers, where he was a hospital chaplain. There he brought about many much-needed reformations and from amongst the nurses and residents organised the nucleus of the Daughters of Wisdom. Like so many reformers, he aroused resentment and was obliged to resign. He began to give missions to the poor, but his enemies persuaded the Bishop to forbid him to preach in that diocese. Louis set off for Rome and obtained the title of Missionary Apostolic from Pope Clement XI. He chose as his mission-field Brittany. The majority of

parishes welcomed him, but in some places he was calumniated, especially by those with Jansenist tendencies.

His methods were not always conventional. He would invite his congregation to bring their irreligious books to be burnt publicly in the market place, or he would himself act as a dying sinner whose soul was being fought for by the Devil and his Guardian Angel who were personated by other priests standing by his prostrate form. He appealed to the emotions, but the effect was practical and lasting. He restored churches, erected huge memorial crosses, collected liberal alms for the poor and succeeded in bringing about real spiritual revival.

Nearly sixty years after his death, the parish priest of St. Lo said that many of his parishioners still practised devotions Father Louis had taught in one of his missions. First and foremost of these was the Rosary, which he recommended to everyone. He established numerous confraternities to recite it. He composed hymns and rhythmic prayers too.

Louis did not confine his apostolic work to missions. Everywhere he preached the word of God. Once he was on a boat and the other passengers were singing obscene songs, so he asked them to join him in the Rosary. Twice they responded with jeers, but eventually they recited it reverently on their knees and then listened attentively to a sermon. He did the same on another occasion to end a rough dance. Even in a Calvinistic stronghold like La Rochelle he reconciled Protestants to the Church. He opened schools too, and a few years before his death formed a few ordained men into his association of Missionary Priests. Giving a mission, he was attacked by sudden illness and died when he was only forty-three years of age.

All the world now knows St. Louis-Marie de Montfort through the apostolate of the Legion of Mary, which has done much to popularise his greatest work, the "Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin." We must

imitate his devotion to Mary and let it show itself in us as it did in him by immense zeal for souls.

He was canonised on the 20th July, 1947. During the ceremony, Cardinal Tedeschini spoke as follows: "He is a Doctor and Theologian, who has given us a Mariology such as no one before him had conceived. So deeply has he explored the roots of Marian devotion, so widely has he extended its horizons that he has become without question the announcer of all the modern manifestations of Mary—from Lourdes to Fatima, from the definition of the Immaculate Conception to the Legion of Mary. He has constituted himself the herald of the coming of the reign of God through Mary, and the precursor of that longed-for salvation which in the fullness of time the Virgin Mother of God will bring to the world by her Immaculate Heart."

26

MARY'S LEGION OF ANGELS

OUR Blessed Lady is unique amongst all creatures. She is the one exception to the whole order of creation, above all, outside all, superior to all. She was created to provide body and blood for a divine Person. For this reason she is Queen not only over the world of matter, but over the world of spirit. The Angels are her servants. The central act of all history was the coming of God in human form. All other creatures were decreed by God only in reference to that central act. That is why Mary stands at the head of all creation.

Long ago, in the very first prophecy of redemption, God foretold that there would be absolute enmity between Satan and the woman, who was Mary. So it is to-day. St. Ignatius of Loyola depicts the life of man as a struggle in which he strives to adhere to the standard of Christ

against all the enticements and temptations of the Powers of Darkness. This conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, is the key to the understanding of the meaning of human life. Because Mary gave men Satan's Conqueror, she still controls him and his wicked legions. That is why devotion to her Immaculate Conception must be a prominent part in our Legionary lives. If we are faithful to our consecration to her there will be a total enmity between ourselves and Satan. Whenever he appears he will find himself confronted by the presence of the Queen he hates and who is invincible. He knows that where she is she must conquer and he must fail.

Our Lord Himself at the time of His arrest said that He could have had from His Heavenly Father legions of angels. So we, in Mary's Legion on earth, are proud to be the counterparts of the heavenly legions. The Queen of the angels is the Queen of the Legion. In our invocations we call first of all on St. Michael. He is singled out by tradition as Mary's chief ally and servant, the first Knight of Mary Immaculate, Commander-in-Chief of the army of God, the first Apostle of Christ the King, the divine Standard-bearer, the embodiment of heavenly gallantry. He was particularly dear to our patron, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, who, like all the Saints, believed that in the last days St. Michael will come in great power to fight for the Church and renew his first victory over Satan. His work is to execute the decrees of Christ his King and Mary his Queen. He defends their servants and vanquishes their enemies.

We invoke, too, St. Gabriel, God's messenger to mankind, whose representative was Mary Immaculate. His dialogue with her was a statement of Mary's royalty and an alliance between the society of the angels and the world of redeemed men, the greatest peace conference the world has ever known.

Scripture tells us of many of the functions of the angels. We, the Legion of the Church on earth, should imitate them in their work as courtiers before the throne of God,

ever singing His praises. We should imitate their perfect obedience to their King and their Queen. We should aspire after the perfection of their prayer. As the angels were God's messengers, witnesses of His incarnation, announcing His birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem, worshipping the new-born King, ministering to Him after His fast and temptation in the desert and strengthening Him in His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, so should we announce His presence in His mystical Body, the Church, minister to His needs in the Church and in every soul and strengthen Him in the Church and in His members by every means in our power. The angels were the witnesses and the heralds of Christ's resurrection; so should we of the Legion proclaim His Godhead far and wide at every opportunity, letting it be known from our words and actions and apostolic zeal that we carry abroad not a human message but one that is divine.

We remember, too, that the angels are the spectators of our lives, ministering spirits sent forth to help us to save our souls. They are with us. Each of us has a Guardian Angel who is burning with zeal to make us worthy soldiers of our glorious Queen. Each of those for whom we work has a Guardian Angel, too, who is anxious that our work should be fruitful. How often do we pray to those hidden fellow legionaries of ours? Scripture tells us also that there will be joy before the angels when a sinner is converted. Do we use that thought to inspire our prayer and support our zeal? St. Paul tells us at least twice that the angels are apprised of the development of the Church. How could it be otherwise when we remember that the Church is a prolongation of the life of Christ, like Him the child of Mary, the angels' Queen? Therefore the angels are interested in every item of our Legionary work. When we are faithful they are pleased; when we fall short of what is expected of us they must lament. Not only do the angels protect and guard the little ones of Christ and bring the just after death into paradise, they are the special

protectors and guardians of apostles. Was it not an angel who realeased St. Peter from prison and who appeared to the Roman Legionary, Cornelius, and brought him to St. Peter to be converted?

Our Blessed Lord Himself emphasises how precious souls are in His sight by declaring that each of them has an angel to guard it, who enjoys the privilege of the direct vision of God. So our invocation is immensely significant. We should be proud of it. We are Mary's earthly Legion. The heavenly Powers are her heavenly Legion. We and they acknowledge her as Queen. How they appreciate her sinlessness, her perfection, the uniqueness of her vocation, her nearness to God and her place in His plan for the distribution of all graces. Let us pray to them for their insight. If we sincerely wish for that we will not be deficient in our Legionary devotion to Mary, which is placed upon us as a solemn trusteeship, an essential duty ranking before any other obligation of membership.

27

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

St. John the Baptist is more intimately bound up with the devotional scheme of the Legion than any of its other patrons except St. Joseph. He went before the Lord to prepare His way and make straight His paths. He is, therefore, the type of all Legionaries, the model of unshakable strength and devotion to the cause, for which he was ready to die and for which he did die. Our Catena celebrates the moment of St. John's sanctification. At the sound of Mary's voice, as she came carrying Jesus within her, St. John the Baptist was sanctified. He was formed for his work by Mary herself. That is just how we Legionaries are supposed to be formed. St. Ambrose said that the main purpose of Our Lady's considerable stay with St.

Elizabeth was the forming and appointing of him whom Christ proclaimed to be the greatest of all the Prophets. When we say the second joyful mystery of the Rosary, we think of Mary visiting St. Elizabeth. There we see her acting as mediatrix of grace for the first time. The first beneficiary of her meditation was the Precursor. So he is from the first the special patron of Legionaries and of all Legionary contacts, of the work of visitation in all its forms, and indeed of all Legionary actions. All of them are simply efforts to co-operate in Mary's office as channel of all graces.

Our Lord thought that a Precursor was necessary for himself. Who knows what might have happened if St. John the Baptist had not prepared the way? So Our Lord still wills that precursors should go before Him. As our *Handbook* quotes: "If Jesus is perpetually 'He who comes' likewise John is he who ever precedes Him, for the economy of the historical incarnation of Christ is continued in His mystical Body." Every apostle is the precursor of Christ. We must not forget that nor underestimate our privilege. We go to prepare the way for Christ, not to radiate ourselves.

Think how St. John prepared himself for his mission. He lived an austere, solitary life, clothed in a garment of camel's hair, with a leather girdle about his loins, feeding on locusts and wild honey. While he proclaimed the coming of the Redeemer he also emphasised that he was but the Precursor of One who was far greater than himself, whose shoes he was not worthy to carry. Those who came to him heard no extravagant demands, no exaggeration. They were impressed most by his example, so impressed that they joined him in his austere way of life and became his disciples. So should it be with us in Mary's Legion. Our very work should draw others to us as active members of Mary's army.

We note that St. John baptised Jesus and on that occasion the Spirit of God rested upon the Redeemer. So, as our Legionary promise emphasises, our work must

always be in union with the Holy Spirit. Forty days later St. John caught sight of Christ in the crowd and pointed Him out as the Lamb of God. It was then that St. Andrew followed Christ and the next day introduced St. Peter to Him. Again an example for us. We must introduce the gentle authority of the successors of St. Peter to all those who do not yet recognise it.

The Gospel makes it clear that even King Herod held St. John in awe, treated him well and allowed disciples to visit him in prison. It was only with regret that the monarch fulfilled his rash promise and sent his guard to execute St. John in his cell. That illustrates another point on which we should imitate the Baptist: people should like us. If they do not, our apostolate is deficient. We will never influence those who do not like us. If they see that we are really sincere, disinterested, anxious to help, understanding, tactful and dependable those whom we visit will like us. Then they will confide in us and we will be able to help them. That is the Legionary programme.

28

ST. PETER

IN invoking St. Peter as its patron, the Legion of Mary expresses its loyalty to Rome, the centre of our faith, the source of authority, discipline and unity. For our inspiration let us just note one or two points in connection with St. Peter's life. St. John the Baptist was preaching by the Jordan. He pointed Christ out to two of his disciples with mysterious words: "There is God's Lamb who is to take away the world's sin." The two ran after the Person indicated by the Baptist. As they came behind Him He turned round. "What are you looking for?" He asked. They were nonplussed. They did not know what to say. They blurted out: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" He

answered: "Come and see." The sequel was that St. Andrew, one of those two, brought his brother, Simon, to Our Lord. Could St. Andrew have known what he was doing? Did he suspect that this brother of his was to be the head of God's people in the New Testament? From that we can learn a lesson. We never know the effects of our efforts for good. We must use every opportunity to lead people to Christ. Who knows but that we may be God's instruments for leading to Him some who are destined to do immense good in the Church. The future Prince of Apostles was brought to His Master as a result of a chance meeting, a conversation, a friend's invitation. God uses circumstances like that to bring about most wonderful effects.

Later on we are told that Our Lord used St. Peter's boat as a rostrum. He sat there and talked to the people as they clustered on the sloping shore. Then He told Simon to draw out into the deep water and lower the net to catch fish. Peter was an expert. He regarded Our Lord as an amateur. Jesus might know a lot about carpentry but not much about fishing. Besides Peter was tired and he did not want to set out on a futile journey. He spoke out:" We have worked hard all night but without catching anything." But there must have been something in Our Lord's look, so he added impulsively: "Still, because you tell me to do so I will let the net down again." We should notice that Our Lord did not promise Peter that he would have a big haul. He simply told him to try again. We know the result. So big was the catch that Peter had to signal to his partners in the other boat for help. We Legionaries ought to learn from this that the results of our work are not our prime concern. In undertaking apostolic work we are obeying the command of Christ and His Church. Provided we do it as well as possible we can leave the results to the Holy Spirit of God.

Our next incident takes place after a mighty crowd had been miraculously fed from five loaves and two fishes. The Apostles were in their boat but the Master was praying

on the hill side. A storm broke. Perhaps it was not all that dangerous but it was frustrating. They were being blown out off their course; they were wet and sad. Suddenly across the waves they saw what appeared to be a light. Did they think it was a ghost, a sign that disaster was imminent? If so it was not for long. A voice came to them clearly over the high wind: " It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter, impetuous as ever, cried out: " Lord, since it is you, allow me to come to you walking on the water." What a daring challenge! See the love in it. All Peter wanted was to be at his Master's side. Imagine his enthusiasm when he heard the Master's response: " Come!" See Peter getting over the side of the boat. Bravely, quickly, he walks, almost runs towards the Master. He can see Him clearly there, a luminous form not very far away. Suddenly, the waves seem enormous. The bright figure is hidden. Peter takes fright and he begins to sink. In his faith he knows where help is to be found. " Lord, save me!" he cries. At once the Master's hand is there and Peter is safe. Note what happened next. Our Lord did not blame Peter for doing such a silly thing as trying to walk on the water. Rather He asked: " What made you hesitate?" He did not blame his enthusiasm but his lack of trust. So in all our work, we must trust the grace of God. It is all-powerful. We must not be governed by the rules of the world but apply to every task the rules of God. It may seem that at times He wants us to walk upon the waves of the stormy sea but if He calls us to do that He will certainly give us the necessary graces. We must not make the mistake of applying to the works of heaven the rules of earth.

Pass now to the garden of the Agony. The police come to arrest their God. Seeing his Master roughly handled, Peter rushes into action. He slashes at Malchus and cuts off his ear. The result might have been tragic. A massacre might well have followed. Our Lord had to intervene at once. He stooped down to the soldier lying on the floor and restored the severed ear. Poor Peter. What a lesson Our Lord taught him. It was as if He said: " I do not need

your puny protection. I have more than twelve legions of angels at my disposal if I wish to call on them." Here is another lesson for us. We are at war but our weapons must always be the weapons of the spirit, and they are the opposite to the weapons of the world. We conquer by faith, trust and love, by obedience, humility and purity. The more we resemble Christ Our Lord the more truly apostolic will we be.

Not long afterwards, when the memory of this miracle was still fresh in his mind, Peter denied His Master three times. Do we perhaps imitate Him in that? Do we make ourselves too much at home in this valley of tears? Do we refuse to engage in heroic or difficult work because of human respect? Do we fear to be known as Catholics in our secular life? Do we try to make terms with the world around us? Perhaps the Queen of the Legion is looking at us as Jesus looked at Peter who, going out, wept bitterly.

How significant it is that Our Lord chose the man who denied Him to be the head of His Church. With all his faults Peter was the loving enthusiast. We will have our faults. We will recognise that in the Church there is always the human as well as the divine element. We will make due allowances. We will do everything we can to conquer our faults. But, above all, we will emulate the enthusiasm of the Prince of the Apostles and be prepared to conquer every difficulty in the cause of the divine Master.

29

ST. PAUL

ALONG with St. Peter the Legion of Mary puts St. Paul as one of its patrons. Recall the road to Damascus. The light brighter than the sun. Saul flung from his horse. The voice asking: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul's reply: "Who art thou Lord?" and a voice from the

brightness answering: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Thus began the missionary journeys of Paul, the Apostle, and thus was engraved on his heart the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ.

Soon after his conversion St. Paul retired to the Desert of Arabia for a three year retreat, a reminder for us that we are bound by our rules to make an enclosed retreat every year if it is at all possible. We should regard that as being one of our serious obligations as Legionaries. The greatest apostles in the history of the Church have drawn from silence and solitude the real inspiration of their zeal and enthusiasm.

We find it hard to understand the vastness of what St. Paul did. We are removed from him by 1900 years and hundreds of miles. At our disposal we have countless helps which he had not. Yet in something less than twenty years he carried the Gospel into country after country, in spite of the efforts of the Jews who regarded him as their enemy, the natural resistance of the pagan Romans and of his own bodily suffering. Five times he was scourged by the Jews and three times by the Romans. Once he was stoned; three times he was shipwrecked. He was imprisoned but freed by God's power. He worked miracles to support his teachings but supported himself by toiling as a tent-maker. Across the dangerous seas, along the Roman roads, through mountain passes he travelled. Robbers attacked him, friends betrayed him. Often he was hungry, cold and weak. On board ship, when all were threatened with disaster, he was the hope of all. At Rome he worked, preached and suffered. In the end he was led out to a spot in the pine wood outside the city. They beheaded him there but his body was taken by the first members of the Church and preserved for us until this day.

Cardinal Newman seized on a characteristic of St. Paul which we might well imitate. He called it the gift of sympathy. This is what he says: "There are Saints in whom

grace supplants nature. That is not the case of the great Apostle. In him grace only sanctifies and elevates nature; it leaves him the full possession and the full exercise of all that is human. without being guilty. Astonishing! he who found his repose and peace in the love of Christ had need of the love of men; he who sought his highest recompense in the approbation of God, was by no means indifferent to that of his brethren. He loved his brethren, not only for the love of Jesus, according to his own expression, but for the love of themselves. He lived in them; he associated himself with their feelings and their interests; he was anxious about their condition; he lent them assistance, and he expected aid from them. His soul was like a musical instrument, a harp or a viola, the chords of which, without being touched vibrate in unison and in harmony with other neighbouring instruments."

He was generous, devoted, and forgetful of self. He won affection by showing affection. He rose completely above self interest and vanity. He was a magnet for souls because he was genuinely sympathetic. He was lovable, tranquil, happy. His speech was soft, his manner prepossessing. His graciousness won all hearts. Yet he was a man of fire; he burned with enthusiasm. Towards error he was uncompromising, but for his friends and spiritual children he had infinite consideration and untold regard. Towards those for whom he worked he was at the same time the father who encouraged, the nurse who cared and the mother who loved. He made himself so small that he was easily within their reach. When they rejoiced he rejoiced. When they wept he wept. Nobody has ever been so eloquent about brotherly love because nobody has ever been saturated with it as Paul was saturated. It was his life. He must have a very special love for the Legion of Mary for it aspires to work in his spirit. Let us often read his inspired Epistles, meditate on his zeal, his sympathy, his generosity, his selflessness, his graciousness and his enthusiasm. Above all, let us often ask his help in our prayers.

30

THE LEGION PICTURE

ON the cover of our *Handbook* is a small reproduction of the Legion picture. Many Legionaries obtain the full size picture through their Curiae, frame it and hang it in the home as a constant reminder of their membership of Mary's army. The picture is meant to be an inspiration and to teach all who study it the Legion's devotional outlook.

The general design reproduces the outline of the Vexillum or Standard. Then the picture depicts the Legion prayers. The invocation and collect of the Holy Spirit and the Rosary are pictured by the dove overshadowing Mary and filling her with supernatural light and divine fire. In this way we are reminded of that moment towards which all time before it moved and from which all time after it has fallen. It lies at the centre of time, the moment when a young maiden at Nazareth consented that the infinite God should take flesh within her and so became the mother of God and the channel of his grace to all men. Active and auxiliary Legionaries everywhere are bound to this glorious mother by her Rosary. They try to render effective the words of Pope Pius IX: "I would conquer the world if I had an army to say the Rosary."

The presence of the Holy Spirit on our picture reminds us of His visible coming on Mary and the Apostles. It was, we might say, the Church's Confirmation and can we doubt that Mary was the channel of it, that it was brought about through Mary's prayers? On that day the Church was born. The Holy Spirit filled it with the apostolic fire which was to renew the face of the earth. As Pope Pius XII wrote: "It was Mary's most powerful intercession that obtained for the new-born Church that prodigious outpouring of the Spirit of the divine Redeemer." As it was then so it is now. The task of the Church is to enkindle that fire in the hearts of men. The lighting of it is a grace

and like every other grace it comes through Mary's prayers.

Look at the border of the picture and you see a representation of the Catena for the letters of the Latin texts are each in the links of a chain. Now look at the portrait of Mary herself. She is depicted as the antiphon of the Catena proclaims her, as "She that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in battle array." She is the Morning Star, heralding the dawn of the Sun of Justice. So the artist has adorned her brow in the picture with a brilliant star.

The principal item in our Catena is Mary's own canticle, the song of the triumph of her humility, so the first verse of the Magnificat is inscribed over Mary's head. Was not this a thought which was ever present in her mind? Was not her spirit always raised to the praising of God? But do not overlook the fact that the letters are letters of fire. The zeal of Mary's followers must be as a burning fire, consuming every obstacle to the apostolate. All the time it must be saturated with the spirit of Mary's humility. Otherwise it will radiate self instead of Christ. God wills still to depend on his humble Mother for His conquests. He continues to accomplish great things for His glory by the agency of those who are united with her.

The Versicle and Response of the Catena are those of the Immaculate Conception, which is one of the primary devotions of the Legion. The words set in the chain border also refer to it. They come from God's promise of redemption to the serpent in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head." In the picture we see this warfare. Between Christ and Satan enmity is complete. Likewise it is complete between Mary and Satan. All those who are consecrated to her share in this enmity. So the picture shows the conflict between the Legion and the powers of evil which are falling back scattered in defeat.

Glance at the picture again and you will see the significance of its arrangement. Between the Holy Ghost at the

top and the globe below (which is surrounded by the good and bad who are embraced in the world of souls) is the bond of Mary, the Channel of all Graces, who is depicted as aflame with charity. Those who love her most will be most enriched. Typical of them is the Beloved Disciple who rests on the heart of Christ and lovingly accepted Mary as his mother. That is why, in the chain border, are included Our Lord's words from the Cross: "Woman, behold thy son: behold thy Mother."

Every line of the picture mirrors our concluding prayers. See the Legion there advancing in battle array, led by its Queen, bearing her standard, the Crucifix in their right hand, the Rosary in their left, the Sacred names of Jesus and Mary in their hearts and the modesty and mortification of Jesus Christ in their behaviour. We pray that our faith will be our Legion's Pillar of Fire and so it is represented in the picture, as the fire which melts all Legionary hearts into one and guides them on to victory. St. Elizabeth proclaimed that Mary was blessed because she believed; the words of that proclamation are also in the border: "Blessed art thou that hast believed." The pillar is Mary who saved the world by her faith. Through encircling gloom she still leads on without a possibility of error all those who call her blessed.

At the end of our prayer is a reminder of eternity: "So that the battle of life over, our Legion may reassemble without the loss of anyone in the Kingdom of Thy love and glory." What a wonderful roll call that will be, when the faithful Legionaries will muster shoulder to shoulder to receive the incorruptible crown of their membership.

As we say our Rosary we might well gaze upon our picture, which is also reproduced on the Tessera. In Roman times the Tessera was like a tally or token which was divided amongst friends so that they and their descendants might always recognise each other. The Roman Legion understood by the Tessera a square tablet on which their watchword was written and circulated to all.

These ideas are followed by Mary's Legion. Every member should have a Tessera. It contains the watchword, our prayers. It is the bond of unity and brotherhood between all Legionaries anywhere in the world.

We should make good use of the Legion picture by explaining it to auxiliaries when we recruit them. In fact, if we fail to do this we have not really done a good job as a member of Mary's army. We have left the potential auxiliary ignorant of something vital. The picture needs explaining and the explanation is well worthwhile, for it includes many points of doctrine and devotion which are really helpful. Indeed, a careful explanation of the picture might even result in one who had contemplated only auxiliary membership undertaking active membership.

31

THE LEGION STANDARD

RIGHT at the beginning our *Handbook* tells us that the Legion of Mary is organised on the model of army, principally on that of the army of ancient Rome. A reminder of this is to be seen in our Standard or, in the Latin name more familiar to the Legion, the Vexillum. Traditionally the military Standard, the flag or the Colours, have been surrounded by much ceremonial.

Records of the most ancient peoples tell us that they had their flags. Carvings and paintings reveal that several companies of the Egyptian army had their own particular Standards. They were formed of such objects that were associated in the minds of the men with feelings of awe and devotion. Standards, for example, consisted of sacred animals, boats, emblems or figures, a tablet bearing a King's name, fan and feather-shaped symbols which were hoisted on the end of a staff. The office of bearing them

was looked upon as one of peculiar privilege and great honour. Assyrians and Jews had similar customs. Sculptures unearthed at Nineveh included different designs for Standards. Most scholars believe that there is an allusion to the Standard in the antiphon of our own Catena. "Terrible as an army in battle array" really means "Terrible as an army with banners." Pliny tells us that the Consul Marius ordained that the Roman Legions should only have the eagle for their standard. Soon it was under the sign of the eagle that the Legions advanced to battle. The Roman Vexilla are to be seen on coins and medals which have come down to us and on the sculptured columns of Trajan and Antoninus in Rome, as well as on the Arch of Titus. The Labarum, the Imperial Standard of Constantine, bore the emblem of Christ.

Let us look carefully at our Legion Vexillum. The fact that it is an adaptation of the Standard of the Roman Legion reminds us that, as soldiers of the army of the Queen of Heaven, we should excel in all those soldierly qualities that made the Legion of Ancient Rome one of the greatest fighting forces ever known to men. It was invincible; and the secret of its invincibleness lay in its spirit and its methods. The individual soldier had to merge his personality into that of the Legion to which he belonged. Of him were demanded unquestioning obedience, utter devotedness, undaunted courage, dogged perseverance and absolute loyalty to the cause in even the tiniest details of duty. In the Legion we offer to Our Lady those selfsame qualities supernaturalised, sweetened and tempered by devotion to her who can best teach the secret of loving, gracious, and humble service.

The eagle which surmounted the Roman Standard has been replaced by the dove, the emblem of the Holy Spirit. It is there to remind us that the true apostle of Mary must be filled as she was with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost must come upon us and the power of the Most High must overshadow us so that we may be instrumental in bringing

Mary's Son to life in souls. Personal holiness is the first object of our Legion membership, and that depends upon the power and the operation of the Spirit of God and calls for a very close union with Him. The first prayers ever said by Legionaries were the invocation and prayer to the Holy Ghost: they have opened every meeting of the Legion for over forty years; and it is to Him that the Legionary addresses his promise. Beneath the Dove is a reproduction of the Miraculous Medal. Let us never forget that here is something revealed by Our Lady herself, and something which depicts for us the essential spirit of her Legion. It has always been pre-eminently associated with our work and it is a matter of experience for many of us that it has been the instrument of many extraordinary graces, as Our Lady promised St. Catherine Labouré. We see there the words composed by our Blessed Mother and recited daily by every Legionary, active and auxiliary, senior and junior: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." We see more: there is Our Lady self-portrayed as the Channel of all Graces; there is her Immaculate Heart, there she is inseparably united with her Divine Son; the cross and the M are inextricably bound together; what the Son won for us by right through his Passion, the Mother won by privilege through compassion.

Beneath the medal is the globe, the great wide field of the Legion apostolate, awaiting conquest by the Holy Ghost through Mary and her children. We have a mission to every soul. Christ's words ring in our ears, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Our work is not finished until every living person is brought within the one fold of Christ and is there living a saintly life. Let us examine our own Praesidium and our own Legionary work in the light of these principles, and under the tender gaze of the Legion's Queen.

32

HOLY MASS

THE work of a Legionary is a work of grace. We cannot be apostles without God's grace nor can our apostolate be effective without it. Every grace that we need, and that those we work for need, comes through the sacrifice of Calvary which is continued in the Mass.

At the Last Supper Our Lord offered Himself under the appearances of bread and wine in sacrifice. He, the infinite God, so emptied Himself that His entire substance was hidden under the appearances of the commonest of foods. Living in the sacramental state He became indeed a Victim for our sins, knowing full well that He was to be physically immolated on the morrow on Calvary. The words He used were sacrificial works. His body was being given for us and His blood shed for us. The separate consecration of His body and of His blood signified separation, that is the state of being a victim. The occasion was sacrificial, too, for it was the Paschal Supper, commemorating the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. Now the true Lamb of God is offering Himself in sacrifice.

Calvary was no mere execution. Mary's Son on the Cross had proved in Gethsemane that they could not arrest Him unless he permitted it. When He made Himself known to them they could proceed no further. He had said that He laid down his life of Himself and no man took it away from Him. To prove it yet more vividly, if proof were needed, He cried out with a loud voice as He surrendered His soul to His Father. He appeared after His resurrection to the Apostles and especially to St. Thomas, deliberately stressing that He retained the marks of victimhood in His glorified body. St. Thomas was invited to put His fingers into those wounds. Bearing those same marks He ascended to heaven and there never ceases to intercede for us by presenting His wounds to His Father.

When the words of consecration are pronounced in Holy Mass the Victim of the Last Supper and of Calvary becomes present on the altar and does there just what He did at the Last Supper and on Calvary and is always doing ceaselessly in heaven, offering Himself for the sins of men. So the Mass does not add anything to the sacrifice of Calvary beyond a new way of offering. The Priest is the same, the Victim is the same and the purpose of the offering is the same. You may have a record of John McCormack singing Gounod's *Ave Maria.* The great tenor has been dead many years. So your playing of the record does not add anything to his original performance. It brings that original performance to you in a new form. So does the Mass bring Calvary to us. That is what it is, the sacrifice of Calvary, and therefore the source of all graces.

Think of it; the Mass is Calvary. Imagine the Eternal Trinity looking down upon every moment of time. Father, Son and Holy Ghost see all those moments as being eternally present but They must recognise one moment as being more precious than all the others. It is the supreme moment of history, the moment when the Old Testament ended and the New Testament began, the moment when the blood of God took the place of the blood of the beasts, the moment when sacrifice reached its zenith, the moment when the power of Satan was conquered for ever, the moment when man attempted the dreadful crime of deicide, the moment when the creature tried to murder his Creator, the moment when mortal man tried to deal out death to the deathless, the moment of at-one-ment, the moment of redemption, the moment that was so precious that God could never allow it to pass. So He brought all His omnipotence into action, He summoned all His limitless love and He preserved that moment for us. We call it the Mass.

If we wish to obtain all that Christ wills us to receive from His redemptive death we must love the Mass. The Legion of Mary knows that not all its members are able to assist at Mass every day. But it urges and implores each

of us to hear Mass as often as possible and at our daily Mass to receive Holy Communion. Let us not forget that our ideal is to be other Marys. If Mary were living on earth to-day where would her life be centred if not in the Eucharist as Sacrament and Sacrifice?

Our aim is to live in union with the holy Mother of God. The climax of our life should be our daily Mass. Therefore the highest expression of our union with Mary should be the way in which we assist at Mass. She was present at the first Masses, at the Last Supper and at Calvary. They did not take place without her consent. She provided the eternal High Priest according to the order of Melchisidech; she provided the blood that was shed; she provided the body that was offered; she prepared and nourished the infinite Victim; she gave us the altar on which the precious blood was poured, the body of her Son. Rightly our *Handbook* tells us: " She stood by the Cross of Jesus on Calvary, representing all mankind there, and at each new Mass the offering of the Saviour is accomplished subject to the same conditions. Mary is present, as ever co-operating with Jesus —the woman, foretold from the beginning, crushing the serpent's head. A loving attention to her ought, therefore, to form part of every Mass rightly heard." Was it as a result of Mary's prayers that those other Legionaries, the Roman Centurion and his men, made their act of faith: " No doubt, they said, that this was the Son of God "? We quote the *Handbook* again: " They were strange children that the Mother of Men first received on Calvary, yet they must have ever made the name of Legionary dear to her." If we strive to be united with her at Mass she will obtain for us all the graces her dying Son willed us to receive.

33

HOLY COMMUNION

At the heart of Catholic worship lies the Heart of Christ really, truly and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine. Put together all you find

in sacred Scripture, all the sermons of the Doctors and the Saints, all the writings of the Fathers and Theologians, all the lyrics and hymns of the Christian poets, all the aspirations of fervent souls, and you can say no more about the Holy Eucharist than this essential, infinite truth—it is our God. Everything else is contained in that. God is present with His human nature as He was present in His Mother's womb, as He lay on the straw at Bethlehem, as He honoured the lowly village of Nazareth, as He walked the lanes of Palestine, as He taught the multitudes and as He suffered and died. The Eucharist is exactly the same one, divine second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

It is the source of all grace. We are in the Legion of Mary to win for ourselves as much grace as we can during our earthly pilgrimage. That is the meaning of personal sanctification. It follows immediately that the Legionary scheme of things must be built around the keystone of the Eucharist. The object of all apostolate is to establish the reign of Him who is present in the Eucharist in all hearts. Jesus came into the world to communicate Himself to souls, to make himself one with them. He does this chiefly through Holy Communion.

If our heavenly Mother were living on earth to-day her life would revolve around the Blessed Eucharist. She would love her Son and serve Him there just as devotedly and fervently as she did in the holy home of Nazareth. When, from the home of eternal joy, we are able to assess the days in which we live we might well discover that the crying evil of the age was not Communism, nor the conflict between East and West, nor lust, nor greed, nor materialism, nor any of the much-publicised modern evils, but rather the widespread neglect in the Church of the Blessed Eucharist. The conversion of the world would be immeasurably hastened if all Catholics were receiving Holy Communion as frequently as they could. As it is, this infinite treasure is being neglected. Souls are being deprived of divine nourishment. Graces untold are being returned to

God unused. Indescribable consolations are unknown to the millions for whom God intends them.

How Mary longs to feed the mystical Body of her Son! Long ago she held her God to her breast to feed upon her mother-milk. Christ in His mystical Body is still her Child. How she has suffered at the knowledge that He is hungry, even starving, because so few approach the holy table. Our spirit should be the spirit of Mary, our outlook should be the same as hers. If she is filled with the anguish of a mother at seeing her Babe almost dying of starvation similar anguish should move us to bring every member of Christ to the food he needs. That is why our *Handbook* tells us so seriously and so emphatically: "Every avenue of Legionary action must be availed of to awaken knowledge and love of the Blessed Sacrament and to dissipate the sin and indifference which keep men from it. Every Holy Communion brought about is truly an immeasurable gain. Through the individual soul it nourishes the entire mystical Body of Christ, and causes it to advance in wisdom and growth and grace with God and men."

Mary's desires are the desires of her Son. St. Pius X has told us that frequent and daily Communion is a thing most ardently desired by Christ. Do we contemplate that enough? The desires of Christ are the desires of our Mother. Think what He has done for us. The proofs of His love form an endless litany. For us He became man, to us He gave the example of a human life lived by God Himself. To us He gave teaching of infinite wisdom that we might enjoy eternal life, for us He suffered and died. As if all this was not enough to us He gave a Church and made it an infallibly certain guide to heaven. To that Church He left the seven Sacraments as channels of life to our souls. Within us He lives so long as we do not drive Him out by mortal sin. He makes us sharers of His own divine nature. He has raised up Saints for our example and given us his own lovely Mother to be our mother too. He watches over us by His Providence, loving us as the mother loves her tiniest child. Yet, when this, our infinite Lover appeals

to us to allow Him to enter our souls frequently in Holy Communion, we find worthless excuses to refuse Him admission. He invites us to be His host. He, infinite Love, our changeless Friend, pleads to be admitted as our Guest. Yet, after all He has done for us, we so readily refuse Him. If Legionaries are not prepared to be frequent communicants, how can they have the spirit of Mary? And if they do not try to spread abroad knowledge of the desire of Mary's Son how can they have her spirit? Let us proclaim from the housetops that Jesus calls us to be His daily hosts as He wants to be our daily Guest. And let us proclaim that the ideal way to receive Him is always in union with His Mother.

34

THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

THE very fact that Legionary service is based on the doctrine of Christ's mystical Body shows how thoroughly abreast of the life of the Church the Legion of Mary is. From the start the supernatural character of Legionary service has been stressed. We are familiar with it from our Standing Instruction: "Legionary duty requires from each Legionary the performance of a substantial active Legionary work, . . . in such fashion that in those worked for and in one's fellow members the person of Our Lord is once again seen and served by Mary, his Mother."

St. Paul was taught the doctrine of the mystical Body on the road to Damascus. There he learned that every individual is a member of the whole Christ, of Christ still living in the world. Christ, who died on Calvary, is still living in his Church upon earth. To those who say that Our Lord left the world in defeat we reply that in reality He did not leave it at all. He has lived on in His Church. What the Church has done He has done in her. The Church is His fullness.

The same truth emerges from Our Lord's own words with regard to His kingdom. It is something very closely united with His own Person, something with its own life, its mystery, something in which He will remain with His own until the end of time. He says He will be in the prayers of its members, in the midst of them, in the decisions of the Church, ever receiving as done to Himself what is done to the least of His brethren.

After the Last Supper He spoke simple words about the vine: "I am the vine, you are the branches." The stem and the branches of the vine are together one whole, the same thing; through each flows the same life-giving sap; both vine and branches live with the same life. So it is that we, the Church, and Christ form one organic whole, one living thing. The branches have no independent existence, they are conditioned by the whole of which they are part. They are not separate copies of the vine. They are not accidently attached to the vine like candles to a Christmas tree. They *are* the vine. They receive their unity from the vine. They are the proof and the product of the vine's vitality. Without the vine they are nothing but without them the vine is incomplete.

To St. Paul Christ is ever present in the Church. All its members are baptised into Christ, put on Christ. He becomes, so to speak, the element in which His followers live, the form that envelops them. Recall some of St. Paul's striking words: "Know you not that your bodies are members of Christ? For as the body is one and hath many members and all the members of the body, many as they are, form one body, so also Christ. You are the Body of Christ and severally His members. I make up in my flesh what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ, on behalf of His Body which is the Church. We are all one person in Christ Jesus. With Christ I am nailed to the cross; it is no longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me. Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. With me to live is Christ." All these and other inspired words prove that the Church is Christ's other self—Christ in truth and fullness,

as if by a new incarnation He still traverses all ages, still teaches and comforts mankind, still sheds mercy and blessing on every side, still gives glory to God and redemption and grace to men. The Church is Christ's other self; we, all of us, priests and laymen are that Church, just as truly as the branch is the vine and my hand is my body. All the members of the Church take the place of Christ in the world to-day. To quote Bishop Fulton Sheen: " The laity will become increasingly conscious of their role as they understand the role of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. Christ in His life in the Church has no other hands with which to give bread to the poor than our hands; He has no other feet with which to visit the sick than our feet; He has no other lips with which to speak the truth than our lips; He is therefore incomplete without us, in the sense that St. Paul says the Church is His fullness."

One of the immediate consequences of this doctrine was pointed out by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical on the subject: " We desire that all who claim the Church as their mother should seriously consider that not only the sacred ministers and those who have consecrated themselves to God in the religious life but the other members as well of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, have the obligation of working hard and constantly for the building up and increase of this Body."

Our *Handbook* tells us that this truth has been described as the central dogma of Christianity. Every Christian is Christ. That is why our first obligation is to be Christ-like, which is another way of saying that our first duty is to secure our own personal sanctification. The more Christ-like we are the more apostolic we become. Why was there a Christ? we ask ourselves. Only to save the world. That is why God became man. Therefore if we have the mind of Christ we must pray and work for the salvation of all mankind. As our *Handbook* says: " The redemption itself is based on the fact that Christ and the Church form together but a single mystical Person, so that the satisfactions of Christ the Head, the infinite merits of His

Passion, belong to His members who are all the faithful. This is the reason why Our Lord could suffer for man and expiate faults which He had not himself committed."

The activity of Christ's mystical Body is the activity of Christ Himself. Therefore it must be conducted in the spirit of Christ. It must be the overflowing of the charity of Christ, stamped with the gentleness of the Good Shepherd. Nor should any of us consider that our apostolic life has no relationship to our sacramental life. The doctrine of the mystical Body belies this. As members of a divine organism we need divine food. The divine food has been provided for us in the Holy Eucharist—nothing less than Christ Himself. So every good confession and every Holy Communion intensify the union between the members and the Head of the Body. As members of Mary's Legion in the mystical Body of her Son we have a special calling. He grew up within her and subject to her. So must we through consecration to her grow in the spirit of Christ.

35

THE WEEKLY MEETING

THE first practical duty of every Legionary is to attend the weekly meeting. Rightly does the *Handbook* tell us: "It is the meeting which makes the Legion." At the meeting the spirit of the Legion of Mary is concentrated in much the same way as a burning lens concentrates the rays of the sun. In that way fire is begun and everything that comes near it is enkindled. So is it with the Legion meeting. There the spirit is found in its most concentrated form. It inflames the members just as the sun's rays passing through that lens inflame the material underneath. Then being inflamed themselves the Legionaries enkindle with apostolic zeal all those around them. That is the ideal.

Another example is given to us. See pieces of coal lying about the yard unused. See the same gathered altogether

in the burning fire. What a difference! So it is with the individuals who compose a Praesidium of the Legion of Mary. They come together, they pray, they exchange reports, they receive work, they hear the spiritual reading and absorb the *allocutio* and as a result they are filled with zeal to work for Mary, their Queen.

At our meeting we see the life of the movement rather than the qualities of the individual members or even the duty or the urgency of the work done. These last are mirrored in the reports but what strikes the visitor to a Legion meeting is the characteristic of a well-marked life. That is the magnet which attracts new members. A tradition is here which has resulted in loyalty, respect, obedience, and powerful inspiration. We lean on our meeting as upon a wise old mother. It saves us from every pitfall, from the imprudencies of zeal, from the discouragement of failure, from the elevation of success, from the hesitancy of the unsupported opinion, from the timidity of loneliness and from the quicksand of inexperience. In themselves our good intentions are raw material. They must be formed, matured, educated and directed to action. Our Praesidium does that according to a regular plan and the result is expansion and continuity.

Other illustrations exemplify the place of our meeting. It is to the Legion what the heart is to the body. From the heart the life blood flows through all the veins and arteries to all the organs which need it. So from the Legion meeting the true spirit flows through all the members. If our meeting is not all that it should be then the heart is ailing. Again we may think of our Praesidium meeting as the power-house from which the spirit comes. Electricity is generated by the ceaseless motion of the turbines whence it passes along the wires and the cables to form power and heat and light. So with our Praesidium meeting. The spirit of the Legion is concentrated here. It passes out with each of us in the form of apostolic power, the warmth of supernatural love and the light of spiritual insight. Our meeting

is like the treasury, a spiritual bank from which we each draw according as we each contribute to it. But the assets are always more than the joint total of contributions for there is an unseen member, Mary, the Legion's Queen who must surely make a massive contribution to every gathering of her devoted children. With the Spirit of God she sits unseen in the midst of us, her Legionaries, and through her the grace of the work is bestowed.

Let us all then note that our first and most sacred duty to the Legion, for which nothing else can supply, is regular attendance at the weekly meeting of the Praesidium. Without it our work will be like a body without a soul. Neglect the meeting and the work will soon become ineffective. Nor will we persevere long in membership if we are unfaithful to the first duty it entails. Indeed, the weekly meeting of the Praesidium is the mainstay of our membership, for we find in its wealth of prayer, its ritual, its distinctive atmosphere, its reports of duty done, its happy comradeship, its magnetic discipline, its lively interest and its orderliness the support that is essential for perseverance in our work. At times attendance may be difficult but real merit shows itself in the conquering of difficulties. The meeting is to the doing of work as a root is to the flower; the latter will not live without the former. No matter what argument to the contrary is heard let us be convinced that our first duty is attendance at the weekly meeting of our Praesidium. That is our rule; we must observe it.

Finally a quotation from the *Handbook*: "Fidelity in attendance in the face of long travelling to and fro is proof of a deep supernatural vision, for natural reasoning suggests that the value of the meeting is outweighed by the waste of time involved in the travelling. But it is not time wasted. It is a part, an especially meritorious part, of the whole work done. Was Mary's long journey in the visitation a waste of time?"

36

ABOUT OUR MEETING

THE spirit of the Legion of Mary is more wonderful than words can describe. We attain it by absolute fidelity to all the requirements of our *Handbook*. But merely reading and studying the *Handbook* alone will not give us the spirit. We must do *all* that the *Handbook* says. But, again, merely doing things will not necessarily give us the spirit. They must be done in a certain way. This applies particularly to the conduct of our meeting. The *Handbook* insists that the key word is respect. Every Legionary must respect his Praesidium meetings. The Officers must respect their Council meetings. Respect them they will not unless the meetings are worthy of that respect.

What does respect really mean? That we recognise the value of the meeting and like it. Respect implies deference or veneration. There is an element akin to worship in it. We respect what we honour. There should be also a certain warmth of feeling, a genuine attachment to the meeting. We should esteem and admire it in the sense that we recognise in it something superior to ourselves. This will make us enthusiastic for the perfection of the meeting. We will cherish it and value it and make sure that no element is deficient.

Our Praesidium will not long hold our loyalty unless it is worthy of our respect. It must rise above the average of us, the members, because it is meant to be our guide. We look to it to help and teach us. Our meeting must be our leader towards the perfection of the spirit of the Legion. It must go in advance of all of us who compose it and keep us always under control. Indeed, a good Praesidium will not only guide and lead; it will steer also, manoeuvering its members so that our efforts will be most effective. The good Praesidium is like the pilot ship which steers a vessel safely through unknown or difficult waters, through long and narrow channels. The member looks to the meeting

to guide him lest he lose his way or run afoul of obstacles or dangers.

A Praesidium worthy of respect will communicate real life to the member. The *Handbook* tells us that the essence of the Legionary spirit is the effort to achieve excellence. Our Praesidium must always try to do that. It will succeed in so far as each of us members has that ideal. Of course, the Praesidium must show that it is worthy of esteem by setting an example of unfailing fidelity to the rules appointed for it by authority. No Praesiduim is worthy of respect or admiration which does not observe the directions of the *Handbook* exactly.

The Praesidium meets weekly. The rule is that our meeting should not be omitted for any cause short of actual inability to hold it. If the usual meeting is definitely obstructed the meeting should be transferred to another day. It is better to hold a meeting of a few members than to drop it altogether. But in every detail the Praesidium must set a high standard of steadiness. It must be always an example even to the most zealous member. A member who tends to be slack will always respect a meeting which is not slack. A member who is tempted to take liberties. with the rules will respect a meeting which allows no such liberties. Or, to quote the *Handbook*: " The business of its future meetings will gain immeasurably from the enhanced respect which its members will instinctively have for something which goes on almost in spite of those who compose it, which stands steady in the midst of their weaknesses, mistakes, and miscellaneous engagements, thus reflecting in some faint fashion the chief characteristic of the Church itself."

37
APOSTLESHIP

We might define apostleship as the pouring of faith in and love of Christ into the mind and heart of another. It is the radiating of conviction rather than the

spreading of knowledge. This becomes evident when we consider the conversions of the early days of Christianity. They were brought about by the common people, the workman, the slave, the little, feeble and oppressed members of that powerful, rich, enlightened society in which they lived. The fact is that then and now every convinced Catholic, even though his knowledge of his faith is imperfect, has a certain mental picture of what the Church means to him and possesses the capacity to convey this impression to the mind of another whom he seeks to influence. Our *Handbook* quotes a former Archbishop of Birmingham as saying: "We must always remember that religion is caught, not taught. It is a flame set alight from one person to another; it is spread by love and not in any other way. We take it only from those whom we think friendly to us. Those whom we regard as indifferent or hostile cannot recommend religion to us."

Argument, controversy and bitterness must be avoided by Legionaries like the plague. We might almost make it a principle that when we win an argument we lose a soul. If we put ourselves in the position of a non-Catholic who finds his beliefs being attacked by a Catholic we will have to admit that the first thing we would do under such circumstances would be to go out and find an answer to the Catholic's attacks or objections. When our faith is criticised by our separated brethren we may know the answer or, if we do not, we soon find one. Therefore, attacking the beliefs of others or attacking others in any way at all is not the Legionary's way of apostleship.

We may meet those who are fond of bandying texts. They will quote the Scriptures and give the impression that they are experts. But we ought not to let them make the ground. Gently and ever so sweetly we ought to ask a few simple questions about the authority for what they quote. How do they know that it is the inspired word of God? Who told them that so many books made up the whole Bible? Who made the choice of those books from

the many which were in circulation in the fourth century? How do they know that their interpretation of the texts is correct when it is questioned by many other non-Catholics? Let them see that they need an authority. They may appeal to the Holy Spirit. With kindness we can point out that that is what so many people do who contradict one another in essentials and so make the eternal Spirit of Truth responsible for contradiction—and that is surely absurd.

Above all, our technique with both lapsed Catholics and non-Catholics should be to make them appreciate the treasures of the Church. Tell them something about the wonders of intimacy with Christ really present in the Holy Eucharist. Talk to them enthusiastically about the Eucharistic devotions in our Church. Let them know how we love the Mass and why. Speak to them about the liturgical year and how it makes Christ live again in our lives. Tell them about the lives of the Saints, never hesitating to point out that all those whose names are household words were Saints because they lived up to the means of holiness which the Catholic Church offers to all. Tell them of the happiness of being able to turn to the Church for certain guidance in the moral problems which perplex the human race to-day. Speak to them of the joy which comes when we know that our sins have been forgiven in confession. Bring them in spirit to the grotto at Lourdes, God's miracle factory, and sweetly explain the significance of the heavenly things which have taken place there. Do not hesitate to talk to them about love of Mary as a dear Mother who inevitably leads us to the Heart of her Son.

That is our aim, rather like that of the modern walk-round store. People go in, never intending to spend a penny. They see something they think they want. There and then they decide to buy it; so with our Catholic faith. Most of those outside know little about it. More often than not such knowledge as they have is false or inadequate. Those who think they have a true picture of it have but a

caricature. Even those who have fallen away have probably only a blurred or prejudiced image in their minds. By speaking to them simply but enthusiastically about our deepest convictions we will make them jealous and desirous of possessing our treasures. Our aim must be to attract them to the Church. Our greatest ally in this is the holy Mother of God.

38
SYMBOLIC ACTION

ONE of the most important sections in our *Handbook* is entitled " Symbolic Action." All our work is offered to Mary as a gift. We must not insult her by offering her anything but the best. Only what is done in her spirit is good enough for her. We are dependent upon her. We acknowledge that with all our being. But that spirit of dependence must never be an excuse for doing less than we can. Whatever we offer her must be the choicest that can be offered. Into our work must go all the energy and all the skill and all the finesse of which we are capable. We are not mere instruments of Mary's action as the pen is the instrument of our action of writing. We co-operate with Mary in order to enrich and ransom the souls of men. We are not inanimate objects like the pen nor unreasoning creatures like the beasts. We are endowed with will and intellect; God pours His graces into our souls; we have many natural and supernatural gifts. We must use all these to their fullest capacity in Mary's service. We give all our action and all our faculties, all of ourselves; Mary gives herself with all her purity and power. She and we contribute without reserve. We honour the spirit of this partnership, knowing that it must be honoured by Mary.

None of us knows how much effort is required for the success of a spiritual enterprise. Too often one hears cases described as hopeless or situations as impossible. Why should anything be regarded as hopeless before the power

of the grace of God concerning which the Apostle asserted: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me"? Why should anything be impossible to those who have at their disposal nothing less than the omnipotence of God?

At times we do find ourselves confronted with something that we believe may be possible but we just do not know how to go about it. There seems to be nothing that we can do. Or at least what we can do seems to be useless or insignificant. The temptation then is to leave such work untouched. Yet because of its very difficulty the doing of it might yield immense results. Perhaps nobody has ever tackled it yet. It may be one of the most important tasks which could be done by the apostles of the laity. Is the Christian to engage only in mimic warfare? Is the confirmed soldier of Christ never to undertake a battle which is really worthy of his mettle? The Legion is an army. We are all Mary's soldiers. Therefore it is a first principle that we must give effort in all circumstances and at all costs. As the *Handbook* puts it almost as a slogan: "Both naturally and supernaturally the repudiation of impossibility is the key to the possible." In other words if we steadfastly refuse to believe that a task is impossible we will persevere with it and in the end prove that it is possible.

In our own day we have examples of this. Not all that long ago it would have been considered madness to try to fly the Atlantic in a mechanically propelled machine weighing many tons or to cross the Antarctic continent or to climb Mount Everest or to split the atom or to fly round the world in space. Yet these things have now all been done. They were thought to be impossible but they have been proved to be possible. And yet those who did them used nothing but natural powers. How then can we dub as impossible any spiritual work which seems to be according to God's will? "With God no work shall be impossible." Our Lord promised that miracles would follow faith, greater miracles, indeed, than those He accomplished. "Greater than these shall ye do."

When His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, received in audience a Legion envoy who was returning from South America he said to her " You are an envoy of the Legion of Mary, then you are invincible." We must really believe that. We are invincible if we present insuperable difficulties to our being overcome, resisted or displaced. United with Mary we should seem to the powers of darkness incapable of being vanquished. Mary is certainly unconquerable. She successfully resisted Satan's attempts to master her. So should it be with her Legion. We should not give in. Even when difficulties seem to be absolutely insuperable we must persevere with fortitude until they are overcome. That is how wordly heroes succeed. That was the spirit which conquered Everest and the Antarctic. That has brought about all the great achievements of human history. Are we of Mary's army to be less dauntless, less intrepid than those who work for wordly glory? Is our perseverance to be less stubborn, our tenacity less dogged, our will less resolute or our purpose less steadfast?

Even to wordly matters our slogan can be applied: " Every impossibility is divisible into thirty nine steps each of which is possible." The *Handbook* uses " thirty nine " as a picturesque allusion to the title of a well-known novel. That slogan is supremely sensible. It summarises the philosophy of success. Apply it in definite circumstances and you will see how true this is. Find yourself confronted with what seems to be impossible or at least immensely difficult. You are tempted to say to yourself: " There is nothing we can do about that." So with the surrender of your mind comes the sympathetic relaxation of your whole being into inactivity. In fact almost every difficulty can be regarded as an impossibility when one is not courageous enough to face the reality. We have weapons at our disposal with which we can conquer.

Imagine the first invaders of Britain arriving with their small craft at the foot of the white cliffs of the Kent coast. What could they do? Either look for a way round them or attempt to scale them. Suppose no way round was avail-

able? Was all attempt to land to be abandoned? Who was to know what treasures lay beyond those seemingly insuperable cliffs? They must be scaled at all costs. So scaled they would be. With the aid of implements they would be climbed step by step. Stairs would be cut in them or made by instruments dug into the chalk. So by taking one step at a time what seemed to be impossible would be accomplished.

So it is with apostolic work. When we are confronted with a difficulty we must take a step. No matter how serious that difficulty seems to be that step must be taken. It must be as effective a step as it can be. But even if the step which can be taken seems to be almost useless some active gesture must be made, that is something more than a prayer, something which tends towards or has some relation to the objective. That is what we mean by symbolic action. Have recourse to it and we will soon discover that many an impossibility exists only in our own imagination. Apply it in the spirit of faith and only that which is genuinely impossible will fail to be done.

39

HARMONY

SOMEWHERE in our *Handbook* there is the telling phrase that when the harmony is gone all is gone. Harmony is the outward expression of the spirit of love. Since every Legionary is meant to be another Mary love must reign supreme in his heart. Nobody observed more perfectly than God's Mother the first and the greatest Commandment that God must be loved with all one's heart and soul and mind and strength. In her that love overflowed upon all whom God loves so that she observed with absolute perfection the second Commandment which is the same as the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Our Blessed Lord left us in no doubt about the importance of charity. He said it was His own special commandment, a new commandment, the commandment by which all men would know that we are His disciples. Little need to repeat the well-known praises of charity by St. Paul. Without it we are simply like the noisy trumpet or the clanging cymbal, all noise and no substance. Likewise St. John tells us that whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. God is love. We must love one another because God has first loved us.

Some people find it rather difficult to understand that charity must be supernatural. It does not run parallel with our natural likes and dislikes. It arises from supernatural motives. We love because God loves all His creatures, lives in all, is the Father of all, died for all and wants all to be His companions throughout eternity. Unless our charity is supernatural it will never be universal. We are all in danger of confusing true charity with natural affection. We think we love those we like. At the end of our lives we may be sadly disappointed to find that that sort of love has brought us no supernatural reward. There are those who are our type, who flatter us, with whom we get on well, who agree with us and so forth. Our love for them may be a purely natural thing, devoid of supernatural merit. On the other hand, there are those whom we naturally tend to dislike, who are not our type, do not agree with us, annoy us, seem tiresome, may be thoroughly bad, ungrateful, dirty, feckless, who may have let us down time and time again. How can we love them, except we are moved by motives that are truly supernatural?

Perfection consists in love. We are in the Legion of Mary primarily to sanctify ourselves, and holiness is love. Love grows through the performance of acts of love. It is rather like the snowball on the mountain which, rolling down the slope becomes larger and larger until eventually it assumes the proportions of an avalanche. In the Legion we are performing, or should be, many marvellous acts of charity.

These all contribute to our sanctification. Therefore, we must make sure that our Legionary work is inspired solely by this highest of motives, love of God and of our neighbour.

The ideal Our Lord puts before us is that we must love one another as He has first loved us. He certainly did not love us merely for our natural qualities. The Apostles were ignorant, faithless and had many shortcomings but Christ called them friends. He laid down his life for His friends. Are we prepared to lay down our lives for those for whom we work?

People who engage in apostolic work tend to be too critical. We are prone to criticise. We are working very often amongst people whose actions seem open to criticism, but we are warned that the Legionary is never to be the critic. We must not sit in judgment nor set up our own standards of thought and conduct as standards to which everybody must conform. We will meet many who differ from us in various ways, who even refuse to receive us or have no time for the Legion of Mary, which is so dear to us, but we must not presume that all these are necessarily unworthy people. God alone sees the heart. In the case of those who are definitely worthy of blame we ought to find excuses. Suppose we had been born in their circumstances, had their education, their difficulties, their discouragements, their friends? Would we have been any better? There is goodness in everybody. We must discover it. A good critic looks for goodness. There is an old saying and a true one: "Any fool can see another's folly but it takes a wise man to see another's wisdom." We need insight to see the good in everybody but it is there and once we have found it we can build upon it.

We must never forget that there are always more than two sides to every question and that some of the other sides may be nearer to the truth than that which monopolises our own minds. If we are too prone to criticise we

cannot blame those who do not accept our views even on important things. Few people will confide in us if we have the habit of greeting ideas with a blast of destructive criticism. True charity means looking for goodness, beauty and truth.

There is only one real way to charity, and that is to see Christ in everybody. " As long as you do it to one of these my least brethren you do it unto Me " is at the foundation of everything we undertake in the Legion of Mary. We are to see Christ in everybody. The *Handbook* tells us that these words are to be written on our hearts. Nobody is exempt. Christ is to be discovered in the evil, the unthankful, the stupid, the afflicted, the despised, the outcast, the greatest objects of natural repulsion. They are the least of Christ's brethren and must be served in a princely and reverential way.

None of us must ever forget that we are visiting not as superiors to inferiors, not as equals to equals, but as inferiors to superiors, as other Marys visiting other Christs. Unless we understand this and practise it we may easily develop the patronising manner of the public official and we will never do any good if we do that. Gentleness and sympathy come only from genuine charity. That is soon recognised. It means looking for goodness, beauty and truth and expecting to find them in everyone. Let us not seek the whole world for an honest man but let us find a whole world of honesty in every man.

It is through kindness that we will succeed in getting the best out of everybody with whom we come into contact. Was it not St. Francis de Sales who used to say that you will catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a barrel-full of vinegar? Experience will soon teach us that even those who are ill-mannered, ignorant and uncouth often have amazing capacity for doing good. In the Legionary, kindness should be an habitual disposition. Isolated acts are not enough. It must be there all the time.

40

WORKING TOGETHER

THERE is an old saying and a true one that charity begins at home. That is very applicable in a case of the Legion of Mary. Unless Legionaries really love one another they cannot radiate charity outside the organisation. Legionaries are themselves a cross-section of men and women. Some will be clever, some ignorant, some rich, some poor, some diligent, some feckless, but all are united in their desire to work for their Queen.

There is no Legionary who has not shortcomings, however small. Towards such everybody must show kindliness. Unless they do the organisation will be deprived of grace. Few things result in loss of membership more than lack of charity.

Sometimes a person joins the Legion through the influence of a friend, who is an Officer. When that person's term of office expires and another takes over there may be a temptation to leave the Legion. If that is so, and it is acted upon, surely the indication is that there must have been something essential lacking in the Legion spirit. For we are not Legionaries just because we like our fellow members, but because we want to serve the Queen of Heaven. Some of us can be terribly sensitive. We see slights where ther are no slights, lack of appreciation where it exists only in our imagination and other faults which depend largely upon our own dispositions.

In every organisation there are bound to be different views and opinions. The policy of one Officer may differ from that of another. One may feel that excellent ideas are being set on one side. Sometimes a President may find it necessary to rebuke a member for repeated infidelity to the rule. But the true spirit of the Legion, based on humility and inpregnated by charity, rides triumphantly over such things.

One of the most important sentences in our *Handbook* is this: "Self-suppression must be the basis of all work in common." Some people are full of zeal, immensely competent, undeniably efficient, but, incapable of working with others. Unless they are prepared and able to suppress themselves they may well threaten the organisation. They will demand that their ideas be accepted. Their very tone of voice will be offensive to others. It is by moderating our own individuality that we serve the Legion best. The system of the Legion is now very well tried. We must not try to bend it to our own ideas, but adapt ourselves and our ideas as completely and as harmoniously to the system as we can.

The work of the Legion of Mary should be characterised by sweetness and gentleness, not only in its dealings with those for whom it works, but, in the dealings of its members with one another.

In discussions at our meetings and in our general attitude as well as in our words we must beware of any lack of sweetness or kindness. Few things are stressed so strongly in our *Handbook* as the danger of jealousy. How easily it creeps into religious organisations. One imagines that another is being given more responsible work, or that one has been passed over unjustifiably in an election. Jealousy immediately rises up and it is terribly hard to suppress. It gives rise to suspicion, mistrust, and, unless it is checked, it will burn up true charity in the heart just as acid burns up the precious metals which are put into it. Nothing poisons human relationships as easily as jealousy. It can be an immensely powerful force, perpetrating the most dreadful things. Some of the most terrible dramas of history have been caused by jealousy. Nothing pays such a bitter wage as jealousy. Shakespeare called it a monster, and Milton said that it was the lover's hell. Another has said that the jealous man poisons his own banquet and then eats it. While other passions will bow before the inexorable logic of facts, jealousy usually looks facts straight in the face but utterly ignores them and maintains that

she knows a great deal better than they can tell her. Jealousy is to charity as the Devil is to the Angels. It is a very fiend of hell, a deadly venom that poisons all that is good and noble. Shakespeare called it "the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on."

When the best of us are passed over we feel a secret pang. We may try to forget. But that is not enough. Legionaries must aim higher. We must conquer jealousy by genuine Christian love. We must see Our Lord in the person who has been preferred before us. Think of John the Baptist, the great preacher in the Jordan valley. The crowds were flocking to him, hanging upon his every word, admiring the austerity of his life and prepared to follow him everywhere. Then the Lamb of God appeared. John lost no time. He said simply: "He must increase, I must decrease." So must it be with the Legionary. If the promotion or success or well-being of any of our fellow members has caused us pain we must reflect that that person is Christ Himself. We should rejoice that He is exalted at our expense. If only we can do that we will indeed be surrendering to the motherly influence of Mary. We are precursors. We must wish to be eclipsed and surpassed by those who we announce. So, if our fellow Legionaries surpass us in zeal or any other good quality, we must rejoice because Christ is growing in them. There is an essential deficiency in the spirit of the Legionary who is happy to see everybody progress except when it seems to be at his own expense. The spirit of envy cannot coexist with true apostleship.

41
VISITATION IN PAIRS

WHEN we break our rule we forfeit our title to grace. One of our strictest rules is that we must always visit in pairs. If we understand the reasons for this we will carry it out without difficulty. In the first place we go in pairs

to safeguard ourselves. There may always be danger. It may be physical danger or it may be spiritual danger. Who knows what temptations a Legionary may encounter? Who knows to what extent he may give way to pride or a false sense of affection? The dangers, especially in these days of materialism and immorality, are too obvious to need description.

Another reason why we go in pairs is to encourage one another. Any experienced Legionary knows how soon the temptation to human respect or common fear arises. We do not get a warm reception everywhere. If we were alone we may feel tempted to miss out this home or that or not to do our work duty at all. But when we are together we can stimulate one another and discuss together the tactics to be used. We can pray together before and during our work. We can discuss the cases we have visited and possibly think of some suggestion to be included in our report. To this the old saying applies: "Two heads are always better than one."

Visitation in pairs is also very useful to maintain discipline. If a Legionary knows that another member of the Praesidium is waiting on a cold corner on a windy night, out of sheer charity he will try to be punctual and faithful. Alone it would be so easy to postpone the visitation for one night and then to find that on the next it was altogether impossible to do it. When no appointment is to be kept excuses seem to be singularly strong. We are too tired, the weather is too bad, we have too much to do and the rest very readily come to mind. Unless we visit in pairs the work soon becomes disorderly, irregular and unsuccessful. The next step is complete abandonment of it.

In this matter of visiting in pairs we should err on the strict side rather than on the other. We are careful to arrange a meeting place. Let there be no doubt at all about it. After the meeting those who have been appointed to visit together should meet and be perfectly clear about the time and place of the meeting, each jotting it down in the

notebook. If one then finds out that the appointment cannot be kept advance word should be sent to the other if at all possible. Members of a Praesidium should be familiar with one another's telephone numbers and postal addresses. But when an appointment cannot be made and due notice of the failure has not been given, the Legionary who finds himself alone should normally wait for half an hour, offering that up for Our Lady's intentions, and then not proceed to the work duty. The *Handbook* tells us that when there is no element whatever of risk the Legionary may proceed to do it alone. This should be strictly interpreted. There are very few works indeed in which there is no element whatever of risk. Even in visiting a Hospital one might be misquoted and then have no witness to bear out what was really said. That is why the *Handbook* itself insists that permission to visit alone is really exceptional. Visiting is done on the authority of the Praesidium and a Praesidium should view very seriously repeated failure of its members to keep appointments.

Those who visit together should have a working plan. If they know one another and the cases they are to visit there will be little difficulty about this. They may easily decide who is going to be the principal spokesman at each house. The Legionary who does not happen to be the leader in the conversation should beware of the temptation of interrupting merely for the sake of saying something and having something to report.

It is hardly necessary to stress that deep charity must always be practised between visitors. Any member of a Praesidium should be perfectly willing to visit with any other member. There is something wrong when we make known our preference to visit with certain members rather than others or when dislike appears on our face when we find ourselves appointed to go with a certain person.

When visiting is completed there should be some understanding about the giving of the report. Visitors should help one another to select interesting points for mention. Sometimes work, like routine taking of the census, may

seem to be dry and hardly the stuff on which interesting reports are made. Here the visitors can help one another. For example, if one feels half way through the work duty that nothing interesting has happened some plan might be concocted to arouse special interest at one of the homes yet to be visited. If all the instructions of the *Handbook* concerning visitation are being faithfully carried it will rarely be found that there is nothing of interest on which to report. Surely some children will be encountered somewhere. They can nearly always be provoked to say something interesting or humourous. Failure to discover any points on which an interesting report can be made is usually a sign that the visitation is not being done as it ought to be and that the basic principle that visitation is intended to establish friendship between the Legionaries and those to whom they go is being overlooked. Remember what we are told: "No one is too bad to be uplifted, no one too good. Not a single one of those encountered in visitation should be left on the same level as when found. There is no one so good that he may not be brought a great deal nearer to God." If visitors remind one another of this frequently they will soon discover that they have more than enough material for a lively report.

42

COURAGE

THEY define courage as a quality of mind or temperament which makes one resist temptation to give way in the face of opposition, danger or hardship. It is a virtue which every Legionary is called upon to practise in a special way. We are the soldiers of Mary, whose courage in following her Son to the Cross of Calvary has been never excelled. We are called upon to be firm of mind and purpose, to cast aside vain fear. Once we are convinced that the task in hand is the will of God we are urged to

summon all our powers so that it may be achieved. We must never yield to the spirit of the world, to the suggestions of the powers of evil, to human respect, timidity or tepidity. Legionaries are always on their mettle, that is they rely upon the Blessed Virgin to give them the capacity to meet strain or stress rather like the granite face of age-old cliffs. We will meet frustration with resiliency, tepidity with ardour, faintheartedness with fearlessness, discouragement with fortitude, cowardliness with gallantry.

Legionaries are men and women of spirit. Strengthened by their Queen they always hold their own in the battle against the spirit of the world. They are never afraid to assert their principles against those who are fainthearted or decry the duty of apostleship. When they are opposed they summon the virtue of trust to support their morale and when they are threatened with frustration they remember that failure is but postponed success.

Devotion to Mary begets a spirit of resolution, a firmness of mind and purpose, a determination to perform well the work which has been assigned by the authority of the Church, in spite of opposition or interference or of circumstances which would imply surrender to the fear of danger or dread of hardship. The resolution of Mary's soldiers should have the quality of tenacity, that is a certain sanctified, stubborn persistence, an unwillingness to acknowledge defeat because defeat means, to some extent at least, the triumph of the powers of darkness.

What are these things which test our courage? Normally they are nothing more than a few jeers, angry words, ill-informed criticism, amused looks or hurtful suggestions. There are far too many people who refuse to undertake apostolic work because they are afraid of what their friends, neighbours or associates will say or think. That is not the spirit of the apostles of Christ who in every century have rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer contempt for the name of Jesus.

What is the effect of lack of courage? Our *Handbook* tells us " All the work for souls is reduced to triviality.

Nothing worthwhile is achieved. Souls which could be saved are left alone. Non-Catholics who could be brought into the Church are not even approached. The lapsed are allowed to pursue their sinful course." All this is because the Catholic body is paralysed by the deadly poison of human respect. It is justified by many plausible phrases. They talk of " common prudence " when they ought to be thinking of the supernatural virtue of prudence which means taking the God-appointed means to accomplish His will. They speak of " respect for the opinions of others " when they know that some of those opinions are not worthy of respect. They back out by talking of the " hopelessness of the enterprise," when they ought to remember that nothing is hopeless before the omnipotent grace of God. " We are waiting for a lead," they say when Christ Himself has already led the way followed by His Blessed Mother and innumerable apostles throughout the centuries.

We are told that we must campaign deliberately against human respect. We do this first of all through the discipline of the Legion of Mary. If we are faithful to that we will find ourselves being gently forced to undertake apostolic work which, in the common estimation, requires more than average courage. We must look upon human respect as a soldier looks upon cowardice. It is something that every army despises and which is punished without mercy. If we love the Legion of Mary and are loyal to it and obey its discipline, the spirit of sacrifice and courage will bloom in our lives. We should meditate often on this quotation from our *Handbook*: "A Legionary without courage! What can we say about such except to apply the expression of St. Bernard 'What a shame to be the delicate member of a Thorn-crowned Head'!"

We are given also a quotation from St. Thérèse of Lisieux: " If you fought only when you felt ready for the fray, where would be your merit? What does it matter even if you have no courage, provided you behave as though you were really brave?"

A good general principle to remember is that our work is valuable in so far as we are approaching those who would rather we did not approach them. To do that constantly involves the practice of the virtue of courage. We will be greeted by sour looks; we may be insulted, ridiculed or criticised, but what of it? Courage will demand that we persevere in spite of weariness of body and spirit. Bravery means that we keep on keeping on even when we seem to have failed or to have been let down again and again by the ingratitude of those we have tried to help. Legion tenacity implies that we do not give up our visitation because the cold is bitter, the rain blinding, the dirt and the vermin of the places we visit evil-smelling, passages dark or surroundings sordid. A Legionary of mettle does not hesitate to set aside pleasure, to take on instead the anxieties of those for whom work is undertaken and to suffer the sorrow which comes from irreligion and depravity viewed at close quarters. We are not Legionaries for glamour but for God and Mary.

43

ENTERPRISE

OUR *Handbook* contains a list of suggestions as to works suitable for us as Legionaries. It emphasises that they represent nothing more than suggestions and that particular needs may call for particular works. The fact has long been established that the Legion of Mary thrives on enterprising and difficult work. Nothing kills the spirit so rapidly as trivial tasks.

There should be a spirit of adventure in what we undertake. We should be aware that we are achieving something beyond the usual routine work of the Catholic apostolate. Of course, the routine work must go on but every Praesidium should be thinking in terms of improvement. In our work there should be an element of excitement. We should

do things which thrill us and do not bore us because of their routine nature. If there is an element of risk in our work so much the better, provided the bounds of supernatural prudence are not overstepped. There is always a spirit of adventure in undertaking something new or particularly difficult. I think it was Emerson who wrote; "The thirst for adventure, a war, a crusade, a goldmine, a new country, speak to the imagination and offer play to the confined powers." Apply that to the spirit of our Praesidium and how does our present work look in comparison with it?

Every Legionary is urged to take the initiative in suggesting new works. The suggestions should not come merely from the officers or still less only from the priest. Each of us should be taking the initiative. In the face of the vast problems which confront the Church to-day we must be resourceful. We must attack problems with sustained energy. The Legion is ripe for mighty exploits. Our work should be worthy of our Queen who is the Virgin Most Powerful.

That is why our *Handbook* tells us that every Praesidium should be doing some work which can be called heroic. Let it not be said that it is impossible to find at least two members who have a heart for such adventure. Let those who are prepared to do this difficult work in union with Mary undertake it, always in obedience to the Praesidium and in strict accord with the spirit of the Legion. Those who do heroic work are offering an example that is a headline for their fellow members. Others will emulate them and new works will be tackled with zeal and enthusiasm. Thus the general level of the Praesidium is lifted. If this goes on all the time, if a couple of intrepid Legionaries are always being sent out on work that is more heroic than that which is being generally undertaken, the level of the whole group is raised step by step.

One imagines objections to this thesis but they are of little value. The world will only be converted to Christ by those who try to have the spirit of Christ. There are many

forms of apostolic work which will never be undertaken, let alone done successfully, except by those who have a spirit of enterprise and heroism. Who will do these works if not soldiers of the Virgin Most Powerful? Our *Handbook* quotes the words of Cardinal Pie: "When prudence will be everywhere, then courage will no longer be anywhere. You will find that we will die of prudence."

Of course, a wrong idea of prudence is abroad. We are dealing with things of the spirit and we apply to them the rules of wordly prudence. Let us take seriously that other quotation: "As long as the understanding finds no trouble or difficulty, and is at ease, that is a sign that one's faith has not gone far enough."

There are many organisations in the world to-day which are offering to young people the active idealism for which their restless enthusiasm is seeking. Even Communism appeals to some. The Church should call upon its members not only for action but for enterprise and effort and sacrifice. High idealism and zealous action should be inseparable handmaids of Catholic doctrine. Young Catholics should have to look no further than their own parish in their search for labours which will satisfy their spirit of adventure. If conquest for Christ is not exciting, what kind of work will be? It would be hard to over-emphasise the truth of what our *Handbook* says: "The Church by exhibiting only a cautious routine would place the truth, of which it is the custodian, in a very disadvantageous setting. If the young once form the habit of looking to purely wordly or even irreligious systems for the active idealism for which generous natures crave, a terrible harm has been done, for which future generations will pay."

The programme of the Legion should be to plan its work with boldness and to execute it with energy, to sketch out a map of apostolic possibilities and then to act as if they were probabilities. If we stand back shivering and thinking of dangers and difficulties we will never accomplish any worth-while work for Christ. Remember, He is with us; His grace is omnipotent. Always obedient to the

authority of the Church let us aim high and literally accomplish that for which we pray—to do great things for God and the salvation of souls. The operative word is "great." Perhaps we can find time to discuss this subject of enterprise as it applies to our own Praesidium.

44

FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

IN the Acts of the Apostles we are told that "they broke bread from house to house." Three chapters later we read: "Every day both in the Temple and from house to house their teaching and their preaching was continually of Jesus Christ." Work from house to house has always been and probably always will be the stable work of the Legion of Mary. Our apostolate is based on the contact of person to person. We want to make it permanent, too. The only way of bringing this about would seem to be to visit people in their homes. Crowd contact work is useful and may have sensational results but its weakness is that it is often impossible to follow up a meeting with a person in the street. Those at home can be visited regularly.

Every word our *Handbook* has on this subject should be carefully studied because it is the result of long and varied experience. Perhaps the key line is that people are to be approached for the purpose of establishing a footing of friendship. Visitation must always have this in view. At our Praesidium meetings we must think about it and discuss it. Is our visitation really bringing this about? Are we using the right methods? Are our calls merely duty calls, making little impact on those we visit? The *Handbook* emphasises that real and extensive good can only be effected by the establishing of friendship between us and those to whom we go. Unless we do this any good we accomplish will be scanty or accidental. We will use all kinds of instruments to do this. For example, we may be

taking the parish census, crusading for the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home or daily Mass or frequent Communion or membership of Catholic societies or auxiliary members, or for any other cause, but the ultimate aim must be the establishment of genuine friendship. Other things are excellent in themselves and the source of many blessings but for us they are means to an end.

If possible we should begin our visitation with a visit to the church. In any case, we should certainly have a prayer in our hearts for all those whom we visit. We might recite Hail Marys together on the way to our calls or between one home and another. When the door opens we should be respectful, good mannered and cheerful. Gentlemen should raise their hats. Our purpose is to begin a conversation which will lead to friendship. If we are nervous we remember that the person we are visiting is probably nervous, too. Most people distrust strangers calling at their homes. We must show them that we are different. We announce our identity by saying, for example, that we have been sent by the Parish Priest who is trying to keep in touch with his people or who is anxious to have the Sacred Heart enthroned in as many homes as possible or is building up his parish confraternities, or something similar. It is most important never to ask a question to which a direct " no " can be given. Experience will soon discover a multitude of questions which require the answer " yes." For example: " You understand how difficult it is for a priest to keep in touch with his people these days, don't you?"; " People move about so much nowadays that it is difficult to keep contact with them, isn't it?"; " You agree that it would be a good thing if people went to Church more frequently, don't you?"; " You do know where our Church is, don't you?"; " Most people have some Catholic relatives or friends, don't they?"

Visitors should talk over their approach beforehand. If it is correct it is usually possible to prevent the door being closed on us too quickly. Experienced Legionaries know that people who at first seem rigid and unfriendly thaw out

after a little while and even invite them into the home. Sometimes it is good to let the person we are visiting talk. In such conversations they often give confidences and make it possible for us to help them. We should not interrupt without good cause. Nor should we seem to be over-eager to impose our point of view. When one of a pair of visitors seems to be getting on quite well the other should leave him to continue and not think he is not doing his duty because he does not put in a remark. We should not argue on matters which are not truly essential. We will come across the type of person who simply loves to argue and will try to get us involved in discussing some pet theory of his. Unless something vital is in question it is better to let him get away with it. We should beware, also, of over-selling our product. Leave something to say next time we call.

The key word for successful visitation is "respect." The *Handbook* tells us that we should enter the poorest home with exactly the same respect with which we would enter the palaces of the great. We are not there to lecture, to ask a multitude of questions, to criticise, to lay down the law or to impose our opinions, but to make friends, to get people to like us, or, as the *Handbook* puts it: "to sew the seeds of that eventual intimacy which will open the floodgates of knowledge and influence."

The special glory of charity is to understand others. If we show that we are "talk-to-able," sympathetic and understanding, people will confide in us. Many people have nobody to talk to. They think nobody will understand them. Sometimes deliberate rudeness at the beginning of an interview comes from an inferiority complex, more from habit than anything else or from previous rough handling. We must submit meekly and not show resentment. I remember the case of a visitor returning a series of insults with the sweetest of smiles. The result was that the person who administered the insults came to hear a series of lectures on the Catholic faith. She eventually became a Catholic only after she had discovered that her husband,

whom she had always known as a Baptist Minister, had once been a student for the Catholic priesthood. This meant, of course, that their marriage was invalid. They separated and he entered a monastery to make reparation for his sin. Another person heard of this incident, an ex-nun who had left the Church, and was so moved by it that she returned to the Church and managed to bring with her her brother who was an apostate priest. All these marvellous things resulted because one visitor had returned bitter insults with the sweetest of smiles.

It is useful to discover something which visitors have in common with the person visited. Much success has come from a campaign to encourage people to pray for peace. All Christians should have interest in peace in common. Likewise the children often provide an opportunity for conversation and questions about their religious knowledge and reception of the Sacraments will yield information which might not be forthcoming from the parents themselves.

Our departure must be as well mannered as our arrival. The way must always be left open for another call. Once again let it be said that if visitation is carried as we honestly believe Our Blessed Lady would carry it out, all will be well.

45

MATERIAL RELIEF PROHIBITED

THE Legion of Mary was, in a way, the child of the noble Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In the popular image that Society is associated with the distribution of aid in material form. By helping the body, its members aspire to assist also the soul. In the words of our *Handbook*: " to give to the poor is a good work. Done with a supernatural motive, it is a sublime one." Nor ought we to imagine that the work of the Brothers of St. Vincent de

Paul is necessarily confined to the giving of material relief. Still less ought Legionaries to under-value it in any way.

For the Legion of Mary the giving of material relief is impracticable. It must not be given even in the smallest ways. Even old clothing must not be given. The field of duty assigned to the Legion of Mary is different. The principle on which it is built is that of bringing *spiritual* good to every individual. Experience has proved that in practice the giving of material relief and the carrying out of an apostolate such as that to which the Legion aspires cannot be reconciled.

If an organisation is known to specialise in giving material assistance its visits will not be welcomed by those who are not in need of such assistance. Charity has, unfortunately, rather a bad name. People do not like to receive "charity." So if the members of a relief-giving organisation call upon certain people they would not be at all pleased. They would consider themselves to be maligned in the eyes of their neighbours. People are excessively touchy about things like that. That is the first reason why material relief which may be to other societies a key which opens, is to the Legion of Mary precisely the opposite, the key with which it locks itself out.

The experience of those who are experienced in welfare work is that, if they visit people to whom they usually give some kind of material assistance and on this occasion give none, those visited are disappointed and even aggrieved. Under such circumstances it is impossible to influence them for good. So the Legion of Mary must leave the giving of material assistance to the agencies whose special work that is. They, and not the Legion, have the grace for it. If Legionaries break their rule they forfeit grace. All kinds of complications and compromises can arise because of carelessness in this matter.

In the course of our Legionary visitation we may come across those who are in dire need of material assistance, of money or food or clothing, for example. The temptation

may be to call round on our own with some left-off clothing or some food or even some money. We argue that we are doing this in a private capacity and not on official Legion visitation. That is false. We would not know of the existence of such cases apart from our Legion work. The knowledge we have is the property of the Legion of Mary and not of ourselves as private individuals. We have absolutely no right to act upon it. The correct procedure is to report what we have found to the Praesidium and to let the Praesidium decide what is to be done. The normal course will be for the matter to be referred to a suitable agency, of which many exist.

If Legionaries take it on themselves to go round giving material relief as private individuals, they may well implicate the Legion and their brethren. Those whom they visit do not distinguish between whether one comes to them as a Legionary of Mary or as a private individual. No amount of explanation can justify what is in fact a breaking of the rule. The disobedience or the indiscretion of a single member in this matter may compromise the whole Praesidium. One who breaks the rule may well be suspected of seeking the human glory of being known to bestow material charity rather than the unseen glory of obedience to legitimate authority. Our rule is perfectly clear. Even in cases when the Legion of Mary fails to secure the material help which is desirable, the Legion is not itself to fill in the gap. That is not its work. Finally let us remember the words of Pope Pius X: " Unquestionably, the pity which we show to the poor by relieving their needs is highly commended by God. But who will deny that a far higher place is held by that zeal and effort which applies itself to the work of instruction and persuasion, and thereby bestows on souls not the passing benefits of earth but the goods that last forever." What we say here about the giving of material relief applies even more to the regular utilisation of our visitation for the purpose of collecting money. It must not be done.

46

CONVERSION WORK

OUR *Handbook* quotes some sensational words of Pope Pius XI: "The Church has no other reason for its existence than to extend over the earth the Kingdom of Christ and so to render all men sharers of His saving redemption." If that is indeed the purpose of the Church then in accomplishing it the Legion should be very much in the front line. Yet tacitly some kind of distinction is made between the apostolate of Catholics and work for non-Catholics, as if they were two distinct apostolates. In fact they are not. They are the one apostolate of which Our Lord spoke when he commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature. If the Church does not go out to seek souls but merely concentrates on those she already has, she will not only not advance but she will lose all along the line. A Church without an apostolic spirit, a Church which is disobeying the explicit command of its divine Founder will never offer to its members the idealism which will be necessary to retain their loyalty.

There will always be difficulties about conversion work. It requires courage and many people do not have courage. In many places it is out of the ordinary and some people are always in favour of conservatism. To many it may seem prudent but their idea of prudence may be that of the world and not that of God. There will always be difficulties but they are there to be overcome. Every Saint in the history of the Church was faced with difficulties. Think of the difficulties that confronted St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver, St. Francis de Sales or St. Peter Canisius. They were not intimidated by the obstacles. They regarded them as challenges which had to be met and overcome. The command of Our Lord is perfectly plain: the Gospel must be brought to every creature. That being His will, we must presume that He will offer to those who work to bring it about all the graces that they need.

We are warned against approaching this subject from the standpoint of wordly prudence. Prudence is defined as a supernatural, moral virtue which inclines our intellect to choose in every instance the best means for attaining our aims, by subordinating them to our ultimate end. That is technical language. More simply it means the virtue by which we choose the best means to do what we believe to be God's will. Prudence is human when it seeks out the means best adapted to attain a natural or human end. Prudence like that is practised by the magnates of industry, by trade union negotiators, by athletes and the like. Christian prudence is based on the principles of faith and refers all things to the supernatural end, that is to God. In a word it applies the rules of God. It is governed not by reason alone but by reason enlightened by faith. It draws its light from the maxims of the Gospel which are usually very contradictory to those of the world. So in conversion work we must remember that " God wills every man to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In saving souls there is no room for those who think in terms of selfish caution. As our *Handbook* says: "Souls are being swept along in the rapid-flowing river of time. Delayed effort will gather in other souls; but not those souls—the abyss of eternity will have enfolded them!"

Before we can convince our separated brethren we must approach them. They cannot understand the truth unless it is explained to them. Even non-Catholics who are considered to be well educated have very often nothing more than a caricature of the Church, which they believe to be a correct picture. They often fall into the error also of judging the Church by Catholics who are anything but a credit to it. They know very little of the treasures of our faith. They think we are exclusive. They see us going to Mass in large numbers. They are often familiar with our habits of fund raising. But rarely do they meet Catholics who are really enthusiastic for their faith and anxious to win new members for the Church.

Those who do think of conversion work almost invariably turn to the modern media by which the masses are influenced, television, radio, films and the printed word. Yet scientific publicity is not bringing conversions on a grand scale. It would be hard to prove that all the thousands of television and radio programmes we have put out have resulted in any notable increase in membership of the Church. All these mass media can play an awakening or a supporting part but the one essential thing is an individual, intimate, personal approach. We must be like the Good Shepherd who said: "I know mine and mine know me." At the heart of any conversion work must be the appeal of one person to another person. As Frederick Ozanam put it: "The attraction of one soul is needed to elevate another."

In the traditionally non-Catholic countries we Catholics tend to believe that we are still the persecuted minority, that those outside are firmly rooted in prejudice or ignorance and impossible to convert. But converted they must be. That is God's will and Christ's command. Therefore they must be approached in the most effective way possible.

Our approach must be like that of the Good Shepherd. Nothing in it must be controversial, nothing overbearing, nothing uncharitable, nothing critical of other religions. Let us combat error by proclaiming the truth. Our every word must breathe humility, sincerity and affection. Our actions and words must show forth one essential thing, that they are backed by genuine belief. When people see that we are sincere, kind and humble they will not resent our approach. They will like us and that is the first step on the way to conversion.

From his dealings with converts every priest knows that religion is caught, rather than taught. It is spread by love and not in any other way. We must remember that God made our religion good and true and beautiful. He also made men's minds to appreciate what is good and true and beautiful. Therefore all we have to do is to present

our religion as it really is. We have to pass on our picture of the treasures of the Church. If we pass it on sincerely, humbly and without affectation there is a good chance that others will accept it.

So in our visitation, let us not pass the non-Catholics by. We must try to interest them in the Church. Every contact with them is an opportunity to do good. We are there in the name and with the authority of Mary. She will help us to pass on the picture which is so dear to her.

(Note: Legionaries will find a plan of conversion work described in great detail in *Operation Information,* a sixpenny booklet published by J. S. Burns and Sons, Glasgow.)

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CRITICISM AND DISCOURAGEMENT

JUST because the spirit of the Legion of Mary is the spirit of Mary herself it must create high standards. It teaches its members to think in an elevated way and to act accordingly. It trains them to engage in apostolic work, to be the living members of the priest, multiplying his personality wherever they are. They must always be on duty, always thinking and living as other Marys serving Christ in His members. A life like this is rather more than has been accepted as normal in many Catholic communities to-day. In most of the English-speaking world we have been a fairly small minority, living amongst the Protestant majority and in consequence feeling something like a sense of persecution. The treatment our forefathers received in England has not been forgotten. Some have spoken of the catacomb mentality of modern Catholics and have deplored it. When an organisation like the Legion of Mary comes along and calls upon the Catholic community to bestir itself, to convert the vast majority around it, to be other Marys radiating Christ, to visit people in their homes

and so forth, the idea is so extraordinary and revolutionary that it is bound to arouse criticism.

There will be many who will admire the Legion, its work and its ideals. Right-thinking people will thank God for it and try to help in every way, especially by becoming active members if they can, and auxiliary members if they cannot join the active ranks. But there will be those who dissent. The new outlook of the Legion of Mary implies a protest against the standards which have been hitherto accepted. The Legion maintains that its way of life should be normal, that every Catholic should be an apostle according to capacity, that all should acknowledge the place of Mary in God's plan for salvation of men, that all should take every opportunity to radiate their faith. The implication is that for generations past the Catholic community has been living at sub-normal level. Conscience is stung and stings provoke the healthy reaction of discomfort and protest. But this soon passes. If the Legion perseveres in its good work and maintains its standards in spite of criticism others will soon follow. The general level of Catholic life will be raised. The routine practice of religion, which has consisted in Church-going and hardly anything else, will be enlivened by enthusiasm, enterprise and a sense of adventure. One thing is absolutely certain: if Legionary work is provoking no reaction whatever it is not setting the effective headline expected of it. There is a deficiency somewhere and it must be found.

The upshot of all this is that we must expect criticism from those who are content with lower standards but we must make sure that our own defects are not responsible for legitimate censure. We ought to ponder well words quoted in the *Handbook*: "Men are conquered only by love and kindness, by quiet, discreet example which does not humiliate them and does not constrain them to give in. They dislike to be attacked by the man who has no other idea but to overcome them."

If unworthy criticism does not lead to discouragement, other things may. We set our hearts on visible results but

they never come. Those who promise to come with us to Mass let us down. All our efforts seem in vain. So a sense of frustration sets in. Everything seems to thwart us, to run counter to our ideals, to prevent our making headway. All we try to do for our heavenly Queen seems foiled by things beyond our control. Our affection for those whom we visit is balked in its path so that we feel it being gradually repressed within us. We wonder if we are being circumvented, outwitted by the powers of darkness.

When we are tempted to feel like this we must put away the thought as being entirely evil. We have, in our work, made a notable contribution to the treasury of the Church. It will be distributed by our Queen for the good of souls just as she pleases. Some beautiful words are quoted in the *Handbook*: "However tiny the mass it plays its part in the balance of the stars. Thus, in a way that only thy mind, O Lord, can perceive and measure, the slightest movement of my little pen running across the paper is connected with the motions of the spheres, and contributes to, and is a part thereof. The same takes place in the world of intellect. Ideas live and have their most complex adventures in that world of intellect, a world immeasurably superior to the material world; a world united and compact also in its vast, plenteous and most varied complexity. As in the material and intellectual world, so it is in the infinitely greater moral world." Every sin shakes that world. It hurts the soul, not only of the person who commits it, but of every man. Sin leads to sin. One sin prevented wards off another sin. That second sin prevents a third sin and so on. Who can tell the result? Throw a pebble into a calm pond. Look at the ripples slowly moving to the banks. Those ripples cause movement in the air above and who is to say where that will end? So it is with our Legion work. If we prevent just one sin who can tell the consequences in the world of the spirit. If we do some good work or try to do some good work, which seems to have no visible result, it might have repercussions stretching far away into eternity. How right our *Handbook* is when it tells us that to prevent a

grave sin would justify even the efforts of a lifetime, the most arduous labour, because by such a thing every soul will feel the glow of extra grace. Lift one man from sin and you may lift up a whole generation to the lap of God. I have heard of how the faith had been lost because of one person's defects. Once I met an old man of 86. He told me that when he was about 20 he had married outside the Church. All his 16 children had been brought up as Protestants. He now had nearly 100 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There was not a Catholic amongst them. Suppose that a Legionary had visited that young man and had discovered what he was going to do and had succeeded in preventing his marriage outside the Church! The results would surely have been eternal. Therefore, we must believe that what we are doing is known only in heaven. Let us not be discouraged but persevere.

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THE CROSS

THE ways of God are not the ways of men. In our human way of thinking we imagine that when we undertake work for the Church we will find support on every side. Friends will encourage us, good people will support us, many instruments will be available to help us. But in practice things seem to be so very different. The very helps, in certain cases, on which we feel entitled to rely let us down.

Janet Erskine Stuart is quoted in our *Handbook* effectively. She says: "If you look at sacred history, Church history and even to your own experience, which each year must add to, you will see that God's work is never done in ideal conditions, never as we should have imagined or chosen." We must accept that as true. It is undoubtedly the lesson of history. It was true of Our Lord Himself and it is true of His mystical Body, the Church. Years in the

Legion of Mary will force upon us the truth that the way of Christ is diametrically opposed to the way of the world. St. Paul wrote it all down long ago: "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong. And the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, as things that are not that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his sight." The Apostle is repeating only what Our Lord Himself had said: "He that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." We must die in order to live; we must be poor in order to be rich; we must suffer in order to rejoice; we must retire to prayer in order to be most active amongst men. So does God wish to work.

The circumstances in which we find ourselves are not of our choosing. We most probably could not choose our parish priest or our curate, the parishioners, the buildings that are at our disposal, the people amongst whom we work. Most certainly we cannot choose the weather or the scenery or our characters or the thousand and one other elements which have a bearing on our apostolate. God arranges all these things. But God is wise, loving and merciful. In His wisdom He knows what is best for an apostolate which is according to His will. In His love He gives it to us. He also knows our weaknesses and in His mercy He stoops down to help us as the poor, weak beings that we are. He does not treat us as saints when He knows we are sinners; He does not treat us as learned when He knows we are ignorant; He does not treat us as strong when He knows we are weak. When He graces our work with the Cross it is always to make it more fruitful. As the *Handbook* says: "The very circumstances which to the limited human vision seems to prevent conditions from being ideal and to spoil the prospects of the work is not an obstacle to success but the requisite for success; not a flaw but a hallmark; not a dead weight on effort but fuel which feeds that effort and aids it to achieve its purpose.

For it is ever God's pleasure to show His power by extracting success from unpromising conditions and by accomplishing His greatest projects with inadequate instruments."

How often a Legionary has envied those in another Praesidium or has wished that he had been allocated different work duty or could work under different circumstances. Yet such wishes may be against God's will. The more difficult the circumstances under which we have to work the more indelibly is the Cross imprinted upon our work, and the Cross is always the sign of hope. God lays down the conditions for success. We must not fight against them. They are all the circumstances, even the tiniest of them, which influence us.

We are just preparing to go out on visitation when the heavens open and the rain comes down. Brimful of charity we call at a home to find the door slammed in our face. We call to invite a person to a happy social but meet with nothing but insults. We offer to mind the children while parents go to Mass but our kindliness is returned with instructions to mind our own business. We are going to keep an appointment and the bus breaks down. Somebody has faithfully promised to come to confession after being away for years but when we call we find that he has been taken ill. These are the things which are constantly occurring. Unless we bear in mind the lesson of the Cross they will upset and discourage us. We may think, too, that we should receive more support from authority, more encouragement from those around us and even more direction in our work. Possibly we should, but the fact that we do not must be accepted by us as permitted by God. All these things are the gift of His love. We are His children and will never be anything else. What He sends is always for our good and can never be for anything else. At the same time let us bear in mind the warning in our *Handbook* that the difficulties which confront us must not proceed from our own neglect.

Where did she whom God loved more than all His other creatures find herself? At the foot of the Cross, with her soul pierced by a seven-fold sword of sorrow and on her head the mystic crown of the Queen of Martyrs.

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PRAETORIAN MEMBERSHIP

We cannot over-stress the fact that the purpose of our membership of the Legion of Mary is the attainment of holiness. The longer we are in the Legion the more should our desire for sanctity increase. That being so, we may wish to take on something more than ordinary active membership. The Legion caters for this by encouraging us to be Praetorians. In addition to the ordinary obligations of membership Praetorians undertake to add: (1) The daily recitation of all the prayers comprised in the Tessera of the Legion; (2) daily Mass and daily Holy Communion; and (3) the daily recitation of some form of Office approved by the Church.

The first condition is clear. Regarding the second, some may feel that they cannot promise to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion absolutely every day. This is not required. No one can be certain of absolute regularity. But anyone who does not fail normally more than once a week may register with confidence as a Praetorian. Under the third condition we naturally ask about the form of Office which must be said. Strongly recommended is the recitation of the shortened form of the Divine Office which is published in various languages. In English it is known as the "Short Breviary" and is being used already by many Religious. It takes about as long to recite as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. According to the *Handbook* the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception, fifteen decades of the Rosary (for Dominican Tertiaries), the twelve Paters, Aves and Glorias (if a Franciscan Tertiary)

or a substantial portion (e.g. Matins and Lauds or the Day Hours) of the Divine Office would suffice.

What a privilege it is to be associated with the Church in her liturgical prayer! Some years ago I was wandering round the island of Zanzibar off the African coast in the evening darkness. The streets are very narrow but suddenly I came into a small square and ahead of me saw a lighted Church. I went in and found it packed to the door. I was able to join in the Rosary which was then being said. Something like this happens when we begin to recite the Divine Office. In our private prayers we are praying as individuals. but when we open a Breviary we become at once one of the people of God. We begin God's work. Our prayer is the prayer of Christ in his mystical Body. We have ceased to wander round the narrow streets alone but have entered the great Church. God sees us now united with all the other members of the Body of His Son. He knows that His Son is praying through us.

Here is the ideal form of prayer, prayer which is always restrained, solidly founded in doctrine, perfectly balanced and expressing the fulness of religious truth. If you say the Divine Office or a portion of it fervently every day you will never be able to overlook anything important in the Church's doctrine and life. You will join in the life of Christ as it is renewed in each liturgical year. In the liturgy you will find a storehouse of the most beautiful prayers which the Church has inherited through the centuries. You will read a substantial part of the Bible every year and recite many of the inspired psalms every week. In the antiphons, responsories, versicles, canticles, hymns, collects and lessons you will find a wealth of beauty, inspiration, love and dignity all blended with wonderful taste and wisdom.

Saying the Divine Office you take on a new personality, you cease to live but Christ takes over. You are officially invested with His insignia. Just because it is the prayer of Christ living in His Church liturgical prayer must be more important, more pleasing to God and more sanctifying

than private devotions. We require faith to believe that and trust to practise it. It is a prayer saturated with love, the prayer of Christ pouring out acts of love of his Father. The Office contains many ejaculations suitable for frequent use. It is the way by which Christ in his mystical Body returns love to God for all God's love for men. When we say the Office God sees His Son in us and thus He will enrich us with heavenly favours. Let us offer it all to Him through the hands of his Mother.

If you think that you may be able to fulfil the duties of Praetorian membership, you should notify the Vice-President so that your name can be entered on the special Roll. All of us ought to study carefully what the *Handbook* has to say on this decree of membership.

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AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP

ABOUT thirty years ago Mr. Frank Duff gave an address to auxiliary members of the Legion of Mary. Here is a quotation from it: " You are in the position of munition workers in time of war. Create this image before your minds; fancy that you look at some proud army—the proudest army the world has ever known. Think of battalion on battalion of perfectly drilled men, perfectly equipped men, rolling past and rolling past and rolling past, until you think they would never come to an end. The clear-cut faces all looking ahead, the natural courage made stronger by the iron discipline and by the sense of a noble cause which presides over all: everything shows forth irresistible life. Yet, as you look, reflect. Consider that army only for a few days cut away from its sources of supply, so that food and drink cannot get through; clothing and equipment cannot get through; ammunition cannot get through. The doctors and the medical services are cut off and cannot lend their aid. That proud army, what is it

reduced to? Disease, hunger, wounds and such like things play havoc in it. That army has become a frenzied, dirty, demoralised rabble, a danger to its own cause. Then do you realise that all the time it was dependent upon the great invisible host of those who fed it, equipped it, guarded its health. The Legion owes the same to you, its auxiliaries. You can be styled the Legion's great invisible army. The active forces are dependent on you and they are grateful to you for your help."

These words prove our vital need for praying members. We must recruit them at every opportunity. They are to be found everywhere, in our families and amongst our relatives, friends, acquaintances and workmates. We should ask every practising Catholic to become an auxiliary member of the Legion of Mary. We need their help.

Let us not over-stress that point. Auxiliaries receive far more than they give. The *Handbook* says they receive one hundred-fold, one thousand-fold, one million-fold in return. This is because the Legion teaches its auxiliaries how great Mary is, enlists them in soldierly service for her, and makes them love her properly. The gain cannot be measured. Auxiliary membership raises the level of one's spiritual life and thus assures a more glorious eternity.

We should be accomplished in the art of persuading our fellow Catholics to become auxiliary members. We make it clear to them that they offer their prayers not for the intentions of the Legion but for the intentions of Mary. She is the Queen of the world and will dispose of all that is given her where the need is greatest. Therefore prayers offered for her intentions always accomplish most. Even those who have already made another offering, such as the heroic offering on behalf of the souls in purgatory, should be enrolled as auxiliary members. They say extra prayers and surrender them all to Mary's will. If she uses them for the holy souls, God's will is done and what more could be required? Let us make known the words of St. Louis Marie de Montfort: " In as much as our good works pass through the hands of Mary, they receive an increase of purity and

consequently of merit and of satisfactory and impetratory value. On this account they become more capable of solacing the souls in purgatory and of converting sinners than if they did not pass by the virginal and liberal hands of Mary." Who can afford to miss all that surrender of their prayers for Mary's intention means? Dare anybody suggest that she will be less generous with them than they are with her?

We should not hesitate to talk about the magic of the Legion to prospective or actual auxiliary members. We should open out to them the glory of being associated with such a wonderful army. How marvellous it is for those who are unable to become active members to know that they are still helping this marvellous army, for although everything they give is given for Mary's intentions, nobody will suppose that the force which has recruited them to say the Rosary and the other prayers every day, will not itself benefit.

When the thrilling picture of the Legion throughout the world and all its works is placed before the prospective auxiliary member that person is given a new interest in life. Experience has proved that the sick and the aged and those who are cut off in one way or another from active life, those who live in lonely places, who find no excitement in religion or who have settled down into routine, have through their auxiliary membership realised that they can really help the Church and that they are important to the mystical Body of Christ, Their interest will be increased by regular visitation and the reading of *Maria Legionis*. No spiritual life can be anything but better for the stimulation it will receive from auxiliary membership of the Legion of Mary.

Our aim must be to bring every Catholic in the district into auxiliary membership. Not only that, we must try to develop in them the Legionary ideas with which we are familiar. When members of other societies are auxiliaries of the Legion also they are united in prayer, sympathy

and idealism, under the auspices of Mary. Our *Handbook* warns us that it is the world-wide adventure and battle for souls of the Legion, rather than the local needs, which are to be presented to the auxiliaries as the object of their service of prayer, subject always to the intentions of Mary for which they are offered.

Auxiliary membership is a real responsibility. So people should not be lightly accepted. There must be reasonable assurance that they will live up to their obligations. Keeping in touch with auxiliaries is one of our most important tasks. We should remind each of them of the benefits attaching to membership of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary. Each is already saying the required prayers and all that is necessary that the name be registered and the beads blessed by a priest having the necessary faculties.

It is our duty to discuss frequently whether we are making the most of our auxiliaries. For example, what steps are we taking to teach them the True Devotion, which St. Louis Marie de Montfort used to recommend even to people who were just emerging from habits of sin? Is it possible for us to organise our auxiliaries, to have regular meetings for them, to form them into a confraternity? Such a union would be united with the Legion and have something of its warmth and colour. Are we sincerely offering active membership to our auxiliaries? Are we encouraging them to recruit other auxiliaries? Is our roll up to date? Efficiency and zeal in matters like these will pay immense dividends.

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RECRUITING

THE virtue of charity demands that we share our treasures with others. Every Legionary must regard his membership of Mary's army as a precious treasure. Therefore it must be shared. Recruiting is a duty we owe to ourselves and a duty we owe to the Legion, and therefore to the Church, Mary and Christ.

We owe it to ourselves because we are obliged to practise the virtue of charity. We know how much membership of the Legion has meant to us. To describe that here would mean transcribing many sections of our *Handbook*. Most Legionaries know that since they became members they have grown in devotion to Mary and her Son, they have been shown a way of growing in holiness, they have been trained in the technique of apostleship, they have been formed in knowledge, they have made many new friends, they have enjoyed the consolation of seeing people brought into the Church or back to it after years in the ranks of the lapsed. Does not charity demand that we try to share such benefits with others?

Recruiting is a duty we owe to the Church. Pope after Pope has appealed to the laity to take part in the apostolate of the Church. So few respond. One of the main reasons is a mistaken idea that before undertaking apostolic work they must be highly trained exponents of Catholic doctrine and more or less incapable of a tactical error. The opinion is abroad that only exceptional people are suitable for admission into the ranks of lay apostles. The universal experience of the Legion of Mary belies this. It has proved to the hilt the contention of the *Handbook* that potential Legionaries may be learned or unlettered, labourers or leisured, or in the ranks of the unemployed. " They are not the monopoly of any particular colour, race or class, but can be found in all. The Legion has a special gift of being able to enlist in the service of the Church this hidden force, this undeveloped loveliness of character. Monsignor Alfred O'Rahilly, as a result of a study of Legion activity, was moved to write as follows: 'I made a great discovery, rather I found that the discovery had been made, that there is a latent heroism in seemingly ordinary men and women; unknown sources of energy have been tapped.' Standards for membership should not go beyond those which the Popes have in mind when they declare that in any class whatever an elite could be formed and trained to the apostolate." We owe it to the Church

to recruit and never to cease in our efforts to persuade our fellow Catholics to enlist in Mary's army.

Recruiting is a duty we owe to Mary herself. How she longs for the salvation of souls. Beneath the Cross she saw her Son's blood slowly pouring away and she knew that it was being shed to save souls. Surely she will bestow a special smile on those who work in her name, in union with her, and under her leadership to increase the numbers of the militant members of the mystical Body of which she is the loving Mother.

Recruiting is a duty we owe to Our Blessed Lord. Every Catholic must have His mind. Every Catholic should think of sinners as He thought of sinners when He said that he had come to call not the just but sinners to repentance and that there would be joy before the Angels of God on one sinner that did penance. We must think, too, as He thought about those outside the Church. Them also He must bring, they would hear His voice and there would be one flock and one shepherd. We owe it to Our Lord to convince those about us that being a Catholic is not just a matter of going to Church, receiving the Sacraments, praying and observing the ten Commandments. All of us have a duty to work for Him, to fulfil the obligations imposed on us as members of the Church, for which we receive the special sacramental grace in Confirmation to be soldiers of Christ.

"Can any Legionary not strive to gather in new members, if he reflects that the Legion cannot but advance them in the love and in the service of Mary?" Unless we ask people to join they will not do so. Subconsciously many are yearning to work for the Church but they have never been told how. We should never lose an opportunity to reveal to our friends and associates this wonderful army of Mary which will enable them to do wonderful things for themselves and the souls of others.

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MORE THOUGHTS ON RECRUITING

THE Legion of Mary is open to all Catholics who lead edifying lives, are animated by the spirit of the Legion or at least desire to foster that spirit in themselves and are prepared to fulfil each and every duty which membership of the Legion involves. Membership must not be a select thing. As many Catholics as possible should be recruited into our active ranks. That is an ideal and ideals are not usually wholly attainable. But failure must not come because we do not really try. We must try to mobilise the whole population for God. People who definitely refuse to become active members should be encouraged to be auxiliaries and to join some other Catholic society.

Successive Popes have said that in any class whatever an elite can be formed and trained to apostolate. Therefore the requirements for membership of the Legion of Mary must not go beyond those which would make this possible. If requirements for membership are made too severe many potential apostles might be excluded. Nor should we insist upon a standard from a raw recruit which members of the Legion have reached only after several years in the organisation.

People have different tastes and different abilities. The Legion of Mary aspires to undertake every apostolic work except the two definitely excluded by the Constitution. Therefore the work should be diversified as much as possible. It must, of course, always be active and substantial. The President is bound to secure from the members the degree of effort and self-sacrifice of which each is capable. To require from a Legionary of good capacity a petty task is not only to do a great injustice to that Legionary but to harm the whole movement.

It would be tragic if membership of the Legion of Mary came to be regarded as a select thing out of the reach of

the ordinary population. Recruiting new members is one of our first principles. Therefore we must be able to offer work which will be undertaken by all. Some think themselves excluded because they have a wrong idea of the Legion. They think of it as a society of ultra-pious people going round the parish visiting homes and busying themselves about everybody else's business. If we are giving that impression something is radically wrong. The system of the Legion itself is designed to weed out those who are for some extraordinary reason unworthy of membership. But exclusion should not come because of a wrong impression given by existing Legionaries.

It is possible to insist too much upon the apostolic nature of our work. There may be people, especially men, who could be drawn into the Legion of Mary by works which appeal to them, even manual works, who after a while would be found willing to do any type of work. There may be a tendency to over-emphasise the visitation of homes which has traditionally been the preferred work of the Legion, its special occupation everywhere, its avenue of greatest good and the apple of its apostolic eye. But we must not forget that the Legion exists to give every kind of help in a parish. Some needs, although important, do not form work advanced enough for senior Legionaries, such as altar society work, the keeping of the church clean and beautiful, stewarding at Church services, Mass serving and the like. But where necessary Legionaries could authorise and superintend the performing of these duties, which would be a source of blessing to the people undertaking them. Although sewing, by itself, may not be substantial active work except under very special circumstances as, for instance, in the case of a disabled person, to superintend and regulate the work of others engaged on sewing could fulfil the work obligation, The same principle could be applied to other works such as those done in the sacristy. If all potential members are to be recruited, it is obvious that certain manual tasks would have to be accepted as substantial enough to satisfy active member-

ship. There are numerous useful employments which come into this category. One thinks of the necessity of keeping the surrounds of the Church in order, caring for the local Catholic burial ground, looking after a shrine attached to the Church and so forth.

This much is certain, that if the rules of the *Handbook* are carefully followed there need be no difficulties but many new avenues could be opened up to the Legion which even yet have never been fully explored. Many priests simply do not know all that the Legion is prepared to do for them. The over-riding aim is to have as many active members as possble. Once in the Legion, they will be trained in the apostolate and will normally be prepared to undertake more difficult works in time. There must be room for graduation and improvement here. Our aim is to mobilise the whole population in work for God. We must be able to offer work for all, even those who are terrified about works entailing religious contact. There are even more difficult works which do not entail that. Let us draw people into the Legion by works which appeal to them and after a while they will be found willing to do any type of work. At all costs we must prevent the idea becoming established that membership of the Legion of Mary is a select thing beyond the reach of the ordinary population. An incidental advantage is that when a Praesidium undertakes many works it possesses additional educative power which will be a great blessing to its members. To cover only certain obvious needs is not the Legion ideal. New works will bring in new members and new members automatically push on even a conservative Praesidium.

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LOOKING AROUND THE PRAESIDIUM

EVERY item in the Legion's system and every detail of its meetings play their part in moulding the members. Is this process of moulding being carried out in our Praesi-

dium as effectively as it should be? If the mould is wrong the product will be defective. So if any detail is not in accordance with what is laid down we will not be formed as we should be in the spirit of Mary.

Our *Handbook* tells us to make a thoughtful journey around the Praesidium and analyse most critically everything that strikes the eye and the ear. Let us do that now. Begin with the Officers: Are they attending the Curia as faithfully as they should and reporting the proceedings back to us? Is everything in the room as perfect as it should be, the lighting, the heating, the seating? Do our meetings always begin punctually? Is the Catena said at the appointed time? Does the President keep a watch before him on the table? Do we put up with whispered or indistinct reports without protest? Do our voices ring throughout the room as the *Handbook* says they should? Are our reports adequate and as interesting as they can be? Does the President talk too much? Are we commenting on reports so as to get the very best from the Master and Apprentice system of training which we employ?

Does the Vice-President keep our books up to date? Are we duly informed when active members are to take the promise and auxiliaries complete their period of probation? Is the Vice-President zealous in looking after membership, making the acquaintance of prospective members, caring for newcomers when they appear for the first time, making them feel really at home and introducing them to the other members? Does the Secretary prepare good Minutes and read them so that all can hear? Is the Minute Book really worthy? Does the Treasurer care for the funds in accordance with the *Handbook* and give his weekly statement of accounts in a way all can understand?

As a body are we satisfied with our level of attendance? We should be certain that nothing short of impossibility prevents our being at the weekly meeting. How often do we hear excuses for not doing work duty or failing to keep appointments?

Is the Rosary recited as it should be, not too quickly and

not too slowly, not beginning the second part of the Hail Mary until the first part has ended? Have we an adequate supply of literature, especially tesserae? If we have not yet acquired a Vexillum, could we obtain one? Would our altar give an impression of care and interest to the casual visitor? Is the statue clean, are the candlesticks polished, the flowers fresh and worthy and the cloth laundered? How long is it since we discussed the question of *Handbook* study? Are we using the best possible method? Over the past twelve months how have we attended the various functions, the Acies, the September and December functions, the summer outing? Have we a junior Praesidium? If we have, are we interested in it as we should be? If not, why not? Would it be possible to start one?

Do we remember our duty towards departed Legionaries? Has the November Mass been duly offered?

How do we observe the obligation of secrecy? Has each of us a notebook and is it kept and cared for as it should be? Do we use a species of code in making entries? Are we faithful to the daily recitation of the Catena? Is there cross-talk at the meeting?

What efforts have we made during the past few months to recruit new members? How many members have we gained? Is the number satisfactory? Does recruiting appear regularly on the agenda?

How many of us have fulfilled our obligation of making an enclosed retreat?

Is each of us showing as much devotion to Holy Mass and the Eucharist as Mary would expect of us? Are we recruiting auxiliary members, explaining the Legion to them, maintaining their interest and looking after them as well as we can? Do they all receive *Maria Legionis?* How long is it since we have organised a rally for them? Do our meetings over-run the allotted time? Do those who arrive late or depart early fulfil the rules as laid down by the *Handbook* by kneeling to say the prayers?

How many members of the Praesidium are doing work which can be called really heroic? Are we satisfied that we are working according to capacity? Could we undertake any new work? Is our work excluding any class of the population? Are we giving material relief? Is each of us doing genuine substantial active work? Is it true that all those we meet in visitation are better for our visit? Do we make the most of our visitation? Are we too critical? Do we approach those outside the Church?

From time to time we should make an examination like this and courageously face up to whatever we discover. Imagine Mary examining the details of her home at Nazareth; examine the Praesidium in the same spirit.

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